Understanding at Limits

The Relevance of Learning in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein and Putnam

Thesis
presented to the Faculty of Arts
of the
University of Zurich
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
by

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Accepted in the summer semester 2005 on the recommendation of

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"It's physically possible", I said, "but morally impossible. It assumes too much coincidence …" Philip Marlowe in: Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*

Ordinary language breaks down in extraordinary cases.
(Austin (1966), 68)

Die philosophischen Probleme *unlösbar* – bis sie verschwinden. Das Problem rührt sich nicht vom Fleck – und dann geht es ganz leicht. Kassenschloss.
(Wittgenstein (2000), it. 157b, 18v.)

… metaphysics without ethics is blind.
(Putnam (1979), 92.)

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Introduction

In this book I advance the claim that understanding is centrally relevant to philosophy. One source for this claim is Ernst Tugendhat, who proposed to take the question what it means to understand a sentence as a basic philosophical question discharging the traditional ontological and epistemological questions:

> Die Leitfrage unserer Untersuchung ist, was es heisst, einen Satz zu verstehen, wobei wir diese Frage als philosophische Grundfrage betrachten, die an die Stelle der traditionellen Grundfrage treten soll, was das Seiende als Seiendes ist bzw. was es heisst, einen Gegenstand vorzustellen. (Tugendhat (1976), 161.)

In the very same sense as the ontological and the epistemological questions are replaced, Tugendhat replaces the analysis of meaning by an analysis of the understanding of signs. He emphasizes the relevance of the function and the usage of signs:

> Wenn … die Funktion von etwas das ist, wozu es verwendet wird, so ist die Rede von der *Funktion* des Zeichens eng Verbunden mit der Rede von der *Verwendung*, vom *Gebrauch* des Zeichens. Wenn wir nach der Funktion von etwas fragen, setzen wir voraus, dass es in einen zielgerichteten Handlungskontext gehört. … Die Frage nach der Funktion eines Zeichens ist daher unmittelbar verbunden mit der nach der normalen Verwendung dieses Zeichens, und diese verweist ihrerseits auf die Frage nach der Handlung, für die diese Zeichenverwendung die (oder eine mögliche) Bedingung ist. (Tugendhat (1976), 180f.)

My own claim that understanding is central to philosophy, however, goes beyond the sense Tugendhat has in mind – namely that understanding is the fundamental, all-inclusive question of theoretical philosophy. The question what it means to understand linguistic expressions has to be conceived of as entailed in the question what it means to understand practices. Thus, in an even more fundamental sense than in Tugendhat understanding is central to philosophy. It is in the name of such a fundamental sense that Haugeland (1998) identifies understanding with "making sense of things" (Haugeland (1998), 1) and claims understanding to be "the mark of the human" (Haugeland (1998), 1). Philosophy's primary aim is to develop, to enhance and to deepen our understanding of the world and of human life. This is to say that philosophy goes beyond mere conceptual clarification. Philosophy, I hold, contributes substantially to the growth of our cultural, political and scientific understanding. By thus changing our views of the world and ourselves, philosophy even has the

power to induce change in the world.[1] Hence, in my conception, what we deal with in dealing with the notion of understanding is not only the basic question of *theoretical* but of all of philosophy, theoretical and practical.

In thinking about these matters, Putnam's work and his way to do philosophy are immensely inspiring. Both the concept of philosophy and of philosophical method I sketch and develop in this book are applied in Putnam's middle and late writings. What I say here, is, I believe, all but explicit in Putnam. Thus, large parts of this book present a rational reconstruction of Putnam's later philosophy. My main contribution in the reconstruction of Putnam's philosophy is to have identified, highlighted and enlightened its central terms, namely the terms understanding, learning, and practice.

Understanding often reaches limits. These limits are reached for different reasons. The working hypothesis of this book is that expounding these limits in order to clarify the notion of understanding and to render its working more explicit proves to be useful to an understanding of the phenomenon of understanding. The starting point and motivation for my discussion of the notion of understanding is a sort of objections Putnam raises in various recent writings. The charge is either that certain philosophical positions or theses are "ultimately unintelligible", "lacking full sense", "incoherent" or that they can not be "fully understood".[2] These seemingly different charges only highlight different aspects of eventually the same point of critique. The notions of being intelligible, of possibly being understood, of making sense, and of being incoherent are in close interrelation. Putnam's charges stand and fall with what exactly is meant by these central concepts. However, in Putnam they are not discussed at length, even though hints are found at various places. Neither are the roles which understanding and its related notions play in philosophy and philosophical argument addressed in sufficient detail. The present study aims at bridging such gaps.

Finding a way to program machines to model the understanding of natural languages would reward its finders with glory and enough money to undertake whatever research

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[1] I owe this example to Michael Hampe. He woke me from dogmatic slumber when he put this idea forward in discussion with Peter Hacker in Zurich in May 2007.

[2] See especially Putnam (1992), Putnam (1999), Putnam (2002a), Putnam (2004); further detailed references are provided below in the respective passages.

they please and to live without material worries ever after. If there would be a Nobel Prize or a Fields Medal in philosophy, this invention would be certainly deserve it. To my great displeasure, I will not be able to present this philosopher's stone in the present book. Much to the worse, one of the upshots of my discussion is that it is impossible to develop a ready-made program for machines to understand natural languages. I am far from the first to put this claim forward. The issue of programming machines to have them understand language has been the subject of intense debates both in and outside philosophy. Arguments like Searle's Chinese Room Argument (Searle (1980)) were developed to show that things like machines will not deserve the predicate "understand" even if the reactions or "answers" to signs given by the Chinese room were adequate. Even if machines are able to manipulate symbols *as if* they would understand language, this manipulation would remain merely syntactical. Semantics would be missing and, hence, a proper understanding impossible. The problem is that we cannot, for every given ordered or grammatically structured set of words constituing a sentence, determine what this sentence, spoken or written in a certain situation and context. Taking syntax or semantics alone into the account does not suffice, there is more to what sentences mean than syntax and semantics. We need to consider the relevant aspects of the pragmatic situation in which the language is used as well to determine what is said in a certain occasion of language use. These relevant aspects of the pragmatic situation cannot be included into a computer program, since the aspects that possibly become relevant in situations cannot be determined once and for all. For this reason, there is no one determinate account of the aspects of a situation but many and there are no rules to determine which would be the adequate account in a given situation.

One might have the impression that this claim is bad news not only for machines. It seems to imply as well that an understanding of language be impossible for humans. Certainly, my claim implies that concepts or understanding cannot be "hardwired" in humans or be "innate". Understanding can neither be a matter of the right "software" to be "installed". This fact has usually been put forward ironically by the consideration that the sense of technical words like "integrated circuit" or "battery", words that have been introduced fifty and 250 years ago respectively, cannot be "inborn" or "preloaded".[3] But how, then, is understanding possible? Is it an illusion altogether? It is clear that this must be a misunderstanding; anyone using language has to admit it is. There must be another way to

[3] See Putnam (1988).

account for linguistic understanding. In the later Wittgenstein, an account of rule-following is central to the notion of understanding. Understanding is related to having an overview (*PU*, § 125) of the use of words and sentences. Since the use of linguistic parts is guided by rules, understanding language entails a grasp of these rules. Hence, Kripke's sceptical analysis of rule-following seems to be a good starting point to address the question how understanding be possible. In order to see how rule-following, and understanding, be possible, we need to develop a substantial notion of how individuals are able to learn and reflect on practices. Survey of the use of words in language is not in enough for understanding. Understanding requires a survey of the normative practices related with the use of words in general. Talk of practices, however, usually is not clearly delineated and the use of "practice" is hardly ever reflected even though it is widely used in current philosophical discussions. To put this point on a sharp end: pragmatism lacks a clear notion of its main term.

A preliminary analysis of the structure of understanding has to take into account that understanding is not always expressed by the word "understanding" or its verbal form, but that the notion of understanding has important cognates. Understanding may well be expressed in a form of knowing, especially cases of knowing how, or knowing in the context of mastering practices. Knowing how to play chess, for example, does not only mean to understand certain moves of a player but the moves of a player in general.

The verb "understand" and its cognates are used in many ways, but we may discern the following broad families of uses:

Firstly, and most importantly, the verb is used in the sense of comprehending or perceiving. In this sense, "to understand" is used either as a two-place or a three-place predicate. In two-place predicate uses, the object of understanding, i.e. what is understood, is either the intended meaning of words ("I understand the meaning of 'to understand'"), derivatively of a speaker ("I understand her" in the sense of "I understand what she just said") or of a language ("I understand Swahili") or the significance, the explanation, the reason or the cause of a fact, of a state of affairs, or of a process ("I understand why there are lunar eclipses"; "I don't understand how prions cause vCJD"; "I understand the functioning of a car"). In the structure "x understands y", x is an understanding subject or a person and y stands for the object which is understood. The subject of understanding can be abstract or concrete. Human persons are the predominant examples for concrete subjects

of understanding; maybe some animals may be regarded as counting among subjects of understanding, too. Communities (scientific or other), corporations, states, nations or legal entities may serve as examples for abstract subjects of understanding; however, there is always at least one concrete person behind an understanding abstract person.

In other cases "to understand" is used a predicate with three places in the sense of interpreting or viewing something in a particular way. In such cases the verb displays the form of (someone) understanding *something* as *something (else)* or "A understands *x* as *y*". This more special form is usually termed "interpretative" or "hermeneutical" understanding. Among the values of the variable *x* are expressions, signs or symbols of any sort, especially *linguistic* signs or expressions. Thus this form of understanding draws us on a linguistic level. Typically, the predicative structure of "A understands x as y" may be rephrased as: "A takes x as meaning (or saying or symbolizing or signifying or representing) y".

It is not obvious from the beginning, which of these predicative structures is more basic, the one with two, or the one with three places. And even if one shares the intuition that one of these predicative forms must be philosophically primary, it is not obvious which would be so. Much of twentieth century philosophy, from Gadamer to Davidson, sides with understanding as being fundamentally hermeneutical and thus takes the second case to be philosophically pre-eminent (understanding as three-place predicate). Of course, this plurality of predicative uses of understanding may be a reason to be sceptical whether there actually is one basic notion of understanding. One may promote the view that there are various notions of understanding and that the philosophical aspects of these various notions – if there are any – are vastly different. I do not happen to think so. The fact that there are differences in the use of "understanding" does not as such imply that there are different notions of understanding which could be clearly distinguished. Rather the structure of a particular form of understanding, or use of "understanding", originates from the structure of the practice this form of understanding is concerned with. And this structure takes the form of the first, simpler form of understanding, understanding *something*. Consequently, in the present study I will argue for the primacy of the notion of understanding in a two-place predicate structure.

Secondly, "to understand" is often used in cases where received information requires to be completed, interpreted or supplied by inference or where something is assumed or

taken for granted ("I understand you quit your job"; "I understand you were not hurt in the car accident").

"To understand", thirdly, is used to express sympathetic awareness or tolerance; it is also used to signalize informal agreement or arrangement. The former is usually expressed by a two-place predicate, signalizing a subjects sympathetic awareness for an object, which in this case usually is persons (again, concrete or abstract), their actions, their motivations or states of affairs (particularly situations they are in). In the agreement case, "to understand" is usually used as an elliptic one-place predicate ("I understand").

In the remainder of this introduction, let me give you a brief overview over the chapters of the book.

The analysis of understanding language presented in the first chapter identifies three predominant levels of understanding linguistic expressions: grammar, lexicon and pragmatics (chapter 1). While usually grammatical and lexical aspects are more or less invariable across different situations of speaking, pragmatic aspects are highly sensitive to the context in which the linguistic expressions occur. Hence, what may be called "pragmatic context" is central for an understanding of linguistic expressions. This is the basis on which Putnam raises critique against various authors, claiming that their views are unintelligible. Putnam's critique is based on the failure to find and determine a coherent pragmatic context for central terms or for central premises of these views. How to avoid incoherent contexts and the breakdown of sense and understanding in philosophy and elsewhere? The idea is to reflect upon the various cases in which understanding comes at limits in learning language, in learning practices, in enhancing existing views of world and life, or in developing new perspectives on matters. In our philosophical context, the unknown pioneer in such reflection on learning language and practices is Wittgenstein. Certain passages on learning languages and rule-following in Wittgenstein's *Philosophischen Untersuchungen*[4] indicate that the relevant aspects of a situation, i.e. those aspects which determine the sense of an utterance in an actual case at least so far that the utterance can be understood, have to be learned. Learning a (natural) language does not mean to study all possible combinations in all possible situations and to memorize all and every possible semantic shade. Such a conception of learning would answer a computational approach and would be wholly mis-

[4] Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (*=PU*) are quoted as reprinted in Wittgenstein (1958).

guided. Just as we do not have to perform each and every addition to master the practice of addition, it is not necessary – if we neglect the issue of this being possible at all – to study each and every possible combination of words and situations to master language. The relevant notion of learning languages fundamentally differs from such a conception which we might term a "totalistic conception of learning". Learning languages rather consists in learning to master certain practices. The idea is that speaking a language is not to blindly uncoil an algorithmically determined procedure. Learning a language therefore is a special form of learning to follow rules. This might be the reason why the issue of learning to understand language has not got much attention in philosophy in recent years. The action has centred more on the closely related issues of rule-following and normativity of practices. In this context, practices were hotly debated.

In chapter 2 I address one influential strategy in answering the debate about rule-following and normativity of practices, the strategy to claim that practices are social practices. In Kripke's version of this claim, the normativity of rule-following practices is explained in recourse to society. Individuals, Kripke claims, are not able to follow rules all by themselves but only insofar as they are counted as rule-followers by the society or their (other) members. Kripke's account has been criticised by various authors. Critics usually follow a mix of the following strategies. They try to show (1) that Kripke's Wittgenstein is not identical Wittgenstein and (2) that Kripke's Wittgenstein fails to give a substantive explanation of normativity and (3) that a more substantive explanation can be given. I will criticize Kripke in a different way. My point of argument is that in fact his use of central terms in his line of thought, like "fact", "objective", "private", is incoherent. As a consequence, his view is not coherent and thus not intelligible as a whole. From the discussion of the use of various notions relevant to practices in this second chapter we learn that practices are normative, that this normativity is genuine and that individual subjects can perform practices on their own. In contrast to Kripke I hold that the question whether a subject is following a certain rule or not is objectively determined and we can make a distinction between a subject's belief to follow a rule and her actually following it – even though individuals follow rules individually.[5]

[5] While I believe that this is what Wittgenstein in fact held, I am not primarily interested in the historical question whether he in fact did so or not. In case we find out that he did not, I simply would claim that Wittgenstein failed to face the facts.

As becomes obvious in the second chapter, subjective and objective aspects are to be distinguished in rule-following. In chapter 3 this distinction proves to be central to a general analysis and explanation of learning. Thus, I identify issues relevant to an adequate account of learning practices and distinguish subjective and objective ways in which the understanding of practices may fail: Firstly, cases of learning in which practices are refined or changed are identified, these cases of learning are called "objective learning". These cases are to be distinguished from mere acquisition of already instituted practices by individuals. Such acquisition of already instituted practices by an individual are called "subjective learning" here. Wittgenstein's paradox of rules addresses subjectivity as well as the intertwined problem of learning in an objective sense. As concerns a notion of learning of practices, we have to distinguish subjective skills to be developed to enable understanding of a practice from the institution of an objective practice itself. My point of argument is that in developing the subjective skills required for an understanding of a practice, the subject develops the relevant objective side as well. The relevant notion of objectivity, however, requires more than simple causal determination. Objective learning needs to be fuelled with a substantive notion of fallibilism. To clarify this, I propose an analysis of the perception of objects as an exemplary case of practices. Objective perception (the perception of objects as objects) is not a matter of interpretation in which objective data are to be interpreted by a subject. Rather, objective perception has to be conceived as a practice involving various understanding capacities. Establishing a substantive – or normative – notion of fallibility and possibility proves fruitful in a positive account of the development of the capacities to perceive objects and in other cases of what I call objective learning, allowing to include modal perspectives on things, processes, and facts. The integration of modal perspectives allows us to model a substantial notion of objectivity.

The notion of practice is notoriously underexposed in contemporary philosophy. In recent years, the first explication of the notion has been offered by Brandom. The very first analysis in the history of philosophy, however, can be found in Aristotle. Indeed, as chapter four shows, it proves instructive take a look at Aristotle's use of the notion of practices and compare it with the notions of practices in Wittgenstein and Putnam. The three authors widely agree on central features of practices. Practices are complete, self-purposive, fallible, they guide normatively and thus they give room for freedom and responsibility. Furthermore, practices display aspects of subjectivity and objectivity. Finally, the three authors agree that there is a plurality of practices which is ultimately irreducible. The idea

of a plurality of practices bears the problem of how these practices are related to one another. This problem is especially virulent in case of linguistic practices. Thus, conceptual pluralism (a broader version of what Putnam originally called "conceptual relativity"), seems to be under severe attack by the arguments in Davidson's famous paper "On the very idea of a conceptual scheme". A close look at the presuppositions of Davidson's critique of the third dogma, however, show that Davidson's arguments have no bearing on Putnam's idea of conceptual pluralism for two reasons. Firstly, Putnam's views linguistic practices as dynamically evolving and not, as Davidson, as static. Secondly, Putnam's pluralism of linguistic practices is not primarily intended to explain differences in points of views of *different subjects* but rather of the same subjects. Practitioners are able to change their points of view and use the linguistic practice which fits their particular purposes best.

In the last chapter, the practice and method of philosophy which has been displayed in the foregoing chapters is taken into focus. In the earlier chapters, one of the guiding ideas was that both the structures of subjective skills an individual displays and the structures of the objective environment it deals with can be read off the practice the subject performs. This theoretical background leaves us with two questions: First, how is freedom in practices is possible? Second, how can we guarantee the objectivity of what we read off an individuals practice? As concerns the first question, we get an idea of how freedom in action is possible without loosing the sensitivity for the normativity of practices by looking at McDowell's concept of "Bildung" or "second nature". Thus, in total opposition to Kripke's view of rule-following, normative restraint needs to be regarded as constitutive for freedom. As concerns the second question, the issue of correctness and objectivity of the described subjective aspects of practices, I propose to go back to Kant, who was the first to have answered this question in theoretical philosophy. A reflection on Kant's supreme principle of synthetic judgments a priori provides us with a guideline we might dare to call the supreme principle of pragmatic method or of pragmatism. As in Kant, this supreme principle provides philosophy with a field of its own and Putnam's unintelligibility charges can be seen in a new light, since they provoke reflection on the structure of human prac-

tices and call our attention to issues that might prove to be philosophically fruitful and to enhance human understanding in general.[6]

[6] Many people have supported this project. For scientific advice and support I would like to thank my supervisors, Michael Esfeld and Peter Schulthess. James Conant very kindly received me at The University of Chicago for a couple of months in 2001. Thank you for commenting on earlier versions or discussions to Holger Baumann, Georg Brun, Matti Eklund, Johannes Giesinger, Marianne Hänseler, Marc Neumann, Jonna Truniger and Marek Vaverka. I am especially grateful to my parents for their understanding without limits – may our son be able to say the same thing of his parents.

1

Understanding Language

In his later philosophy, Hilary Putnam raises unintelligibility charges against various sceptical positions in epistemology and the philosophy of mind. These charges, however, are not brought up in the early Wittgenstein's or Carnap's spirit of "Sinnkritik" by claiming that the positions are inherently contradictive and hence do not make sense. Putnam's way to challenge the intelligibility of philosophical positions does neither concern the grammaticality of sentences nor their lexical consistency but concerns the embedding of the incriminated sentences in a coherent practice. As a consequence, the notion of a coherent practice has to be clarified to render Putnam's unintelligibility charges intelligible. It seems natural to look for such a clarification by determining the conditions of possibility for coherent practices. The problem is, however, that there is not only one set of such conditions; there is not just one general form of all practices. A theory of the coherence of practices is not possible at all, since we find practices impossible to be fully accountable in theoretical terms. The remedy of choice to come by Putnam's unintelligibility charges is to reflect upon learning to understand language or practices and the limits of such learning. The goal is to arrive at an understanding of the limits of learning. In the cases in which these limits are grounded in a practice not allowing for understanding, we might well claim that the practice is not coherent enough. It is in this way, the issue of how we manage to learn practices and how we are initiated in practices proves to be centrally relevant for developing a sense for the coherence not only of linguistic but of all sorts of practices. Rather than teaming up with the early Wittgenstein and Carnap, Putnam's unintelligibility charges line up with the later Wittgenstein's rejection of the paradox of rule-following and of the possibility of a private language against sceptical challenges. Thus, instead of dealing with the issue of the conditions of possibility of practices, the conditions of possibility of learning practices come into focus.[7]

[7] See also Doğuoğlu (2007), sect. 1.

Putnam's implicit notion of understanding underlying his unintelligibility is rendered more explicit by determining three levels which prove relevant for proper understanding: grammar, lexicon, and pragmatics (1.1-1.4) In 1.5 I will introduce some of Putnam's arguments for the unintelligibility of certain philosophical theses and positions and sketch how these unintelligibility charges are supposed to work. The remaining sections of the first chapter serve to distinguish the account of understanding developed here from seemingly similar accounts of "Sinnkritik" in the early Wittgenstein and Carnap (1.6) and to touch on the issue of language learning in the later Wittgenstein (1.7). As is obvious from this discussion on learning languages, the pragmatics of linguistic use cannot be determined once and for all. This is the reason why learning one's first language amounts to more than simply mugging up grammar and lexicon. Learning a natural language is an instance of learning practices.

1.1 Three Levels of Understanding[8]

In "Dreaming and 'Depth Grammar'"[9], Putnam proposes a notion of linguistic understanding in terms of intelligibility. A sentence, Putnam claims, is, given that it is more or less grammatically or syntactically correct, "clearly intelligible" for a certain group "if almost any speaker (in the relevant group) can think of discourses in which [it] could occur without any kind of linguistic or situational inappropriateness, and can paraphrase it readily in those discourses" (Putnam (1975), 308). Understanding (a) is bound to a general availability of discourses providing a linguistic and situational setting, (b) consists in certain abilities and versatilities in the use of linguistic expressions, and (c) to a group of speakers. Condition (a) holds that understanding is possible apart from any particular, but not apart from *every* linguistic or situational context. Condition (b) ties understanding to impersonal, normalized competencies which are, according to (c), exerted by a group of speakers. Understanding is taken generally here and is not related to the particular understanding of a particular subject in a particular situation or her particular use of the sentence. To understand a sentence one has to have acquired the relevant competencies. The intelligibility of a (grammatically correct) sentence, then, is always relative to a group of speakers and their

[8] For a detailed discussion of the three levels mentioned here see also Schulthess (2001).

[9] The paper is collected in the volume Putnam (1975), 304-324

normalized competencies and in relation to discourses and situations in which the sentence is appropriately uttered.

On the other hand, a sentence is *not* intelligible if competent speakers cannot imagine contexts for this very sentence, if they cannot or not readily paraphrase it, or if the sentence is simply syntactically ill-formed. The two conditions of linguistic versatility, the ability to imagine appropriate discourses, and the ability to paraphrase straight away, are not held to be necessary for understanding – understanding might be constituted without them – but both of them taken together are sufficient for understanding. Note, furthermore, that linguistic understanding is always tied to a certain "discourse" or "language game". Putnam chooses to speak of "discourse" or "language game" rather than "language", since what is relevant to understanding is not English or German but rather certain parts of language which form a more or less closed system. Different discourses are "subject to different standards and possess[…] different sorts of applications, with different logical and grammatical features" (Putnam (2004), 21f).[10] Thus, a linguistic expression is meaningful relative to a particular part of language, discourse, or language game.

In "Dreaming and 'Depth Grammar'", then, three requirements for a sentence to be intelligible are postulated. First, grammatical well-formedness is essential. Second, sentences have an "ability to occur in coherent and appropriate discourses". This is, so to say, a requirement in consistency of cotextual[11] logic. The sentence has to fit other sentences in discourse. As becomes obvious in "The Meaning of 'Meaning'"[12], this requirement is relevant for combinations of words as well as for sentences and words. The third requirement, which in "Dreaming and 'Depth Grammar'" is lest explicated, is "paraphrasability". This third requirement finds explication in what I would like to call pragmatic coherence. Before I discuss these levels in the following let me emphasize that further levels may be considered relevant, such as the phonology of spoken language, for instance, or the typology of written language. Kittay slightly radicalizes Quine's radical translation along such lines (Kittay (1987), chap. 6). In constructing sense from spoken or written words we are in general highly fault-tolerant regarding pitch, intonation, accent, omissions, etc., even though such matters might be relevant to the understanding of a sentence in certain lan-

[10] See section 3.3 for further discussion on this issue.

[11] On the difference between (linguistic) cotext and (pragmatic) context see Schulthess (2001).

[12] Collected in Putnam (1975), 215-271

guages or in the case of something being uttered in a qualified way (menacingly, ironically, etc.). Similar points apply to differences in writing style or concerning typological issues.

1.2 First Level: Grammar[13]

On the level of grammar, the condition for intelligibility is grammaticality or grammatical well-formedness, requiring the elements of an expression to be grammatically congruent. In most cases, well-formedness is a matter of degree due to the fact that in everyday language we are often confronted with slightly non-grammatical expressions that remain perfectly intelligible notwithstanding. Thus, if someone said "I like your sister, *he* is a nice person", we would usually assume that the correct pronoun is supposed to be "*she*". Appearing in a book, most people would simply take the wrong grammatical sex as a typo not obstructing understanding in any relevant respect.

Though grammatical well-formedness of sentences is not a strictly necessary condition for understanding, grave violation of the syntactic congruence of words renders an expression unintelligible. For purpose of illustration, consider the well-known example:

[1] Furiously sleep ideas green colourless. (Chomsky (1968), 15.)

This sentence is grammatically ill-formed; the search for appropriate discourses in which it could occur is hopeless from the very beginning. The grammatical incongruities in this example are manifold. Only to begin with, what might figure as the subject of the sentence, the noun "ideas", follows the presumed predicate "sleep", while in English this order has always to be reversed. The incongruities in this example thus affect intelligibility severely and understanding of [1] already fails on the level of grammar.

The congruity of compound linguistic expressions is determined by the syntactic properties of their parts. Since these properties are relevant to the meaningfulness of linguistic compounds, Putnam includes these syntactic aspects into the meaning of words by introducing what he calls "syntactic markers" in "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" (Putnam (1975), 269). Though Putnam restricts his claims to the meaning of natural kind terms and closely related categorematical terms, it is obvious that such syntactic properties are central in case of syncategorematical terms. Such terms are not meaningful all by themselves but only in connection with other terms. Classical examples are "and" or other connectives.

[13] The following sketch mainly draws on the paper "Dreaming and 'Depth Grammar'" (Putnam (1975), 304-324).

connection with other terms. Classical examples are “and” or other connectives. Hence, syntactic properties (or “markers”) of a term determine the roles it can play and the places it can take within a sentence. The role is usually indicated by the flexion or word order.

1.3 Second Level: Lexicon

Grammaticality, then, is a first condition of understanding of sentences, but in point of fact, it is not sufficient for a sentence to be intelligible. If a linguistic expression is grammatically well-formed, we may speak of it possessing a syntactic meaning constituted by the syntactic composition of its parts. Together with the lexical meaning of the categorematical words the thus composed linguistic expression or sentence has what we might call a “linguistic meaning” detached from any particular pragmatic situation.

In “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” the distinction between syntactic and lexical parts of the meaning of *words* – the lexical meaning of *sentences* is derivative in this picture and is dependent on the lexical meaning of their words and their grammatical composition – is captured by the notions of “syntactic markers” on the one hand, and “semantic markers” and “stereotypes” on the other hand (Putnam (1975), 269). These parts of the meaning of a linguistic expression are just as independent of their linguistic surroundings (a wider text, preceding and ensuing utterances or sentences, for instance) as they are of *particular* pragmatic situations. Still, Putnam does not take them to be intelligible parted from *every* discursive and pragmatic situation. For our concerns, this second level of relevance for intelligibility, which is traditionally part of semantics, might be called “lexical semantics”, or simply “lexicon”. These markers and stereotypes include restrictions of combination, not only in the sense that, say, a noun can take certain places within a sentence and thereby play certain roles, but also in the sense that the lexical meanings of certain words are interconnected and live from their difference to one another. Restrictions in combination yield semantic structures or semantic fields.

The idea of "semantic fields" is inspired by Saussure (2003), and is used in linguistics mainly. As I use it here, it is due to Kittay (1987), chap. 6), and Grandy (1987). Grandy defines semantic fields as sets:

> … including one or more contrast sets and possibly also including permutation relations such that:
> 1. at most one covering term does not occur as an element of a contrast set in the semantic field.
> 2. except for the covering term mentioned in (1) any expression which occurs in a contrast set with an element of the semantic field is also in the field.
> 3. at least one element of each permutation relation is in some contrast set in the field. (Grandy (1987), 274.)

Semantic fields are regimented or structured by relations (contrasts, affinities, oppositions, exclusions) between terms which belong to the field. They contain a covering term, which is to say that there is a more general term which covers all terms of a field. All terms relevant to structure the field belong to the field; semantic fields are closed in just this sense.

In ordinary language, for instance, colour-talk is regimented by the meaning or reference of colour-words. Colour is the covering term of the field. If something is green or red, it cannot be colourless. While a particular blue, going turquoise, can have a touch of green, it cannot have a touch of orange. Or, to take another example, the terms "cold", "cool", "warm", "hot" present a "graded antinomy" (Kittay (1987), 225). If one term of a semantic field fits into an open sentence, then all notions of the field in question fit into this open sentence. Hence, all terms of the graded antinomy just mentioned fit perfectly into the following open sentence from a grammatical and a lexical or semantic point of view (regardless of the truth-value):

[2] It is rather … at the south pole.

The linguistic meaning of sentences featuring one of these terms is shaded by the others and a combination of two of these terms applying to the same thing is in need of explanation, if not simply contradictory. In relation to terms used in science, Putnam develops a comparable account of semantic fields under the label of "law-cluster concepts" (Putnam (1975), 50), a notion he further develops under the labels "stereotypes" and "semantic markers" (Putnam (1975), 247–52, 266–71). These conditions for intelligibility on the level of grammar and lexicon largely correspond to Carnap's requirements for what he calls "logical syntax" (Carnap (1931); Carnap (1968)).

To clarify the issue further, the following three sentences may serve as illustrative examples:

[3] Colourless green ideas sleep furiously.

Even though we cannot complain from a purely grammatical point of view (as in case [1]), the meanings of the words in [3] do not fit the grammatical form for *semantic reasons* in at least three respects: (a) talk of "colourless green" is inconsistent, since "green" notionally excludes "colourless" (except used metaphorically in order to point out that something displays a pale green and looks almost colourless); this inconsistency bases on the fact that "colourless" stands in contrast to the covering term of the semantic field to which "green" pertains; (b) the notion of ideas is neither compatible with colour-talk nor with the uses of "sleep"; (c) "furiously" is an adverb that belongs to (intentional) actions whereas sleeping is not such an action.

Comparable entanglements are directed at in the next example:

[4] Dead linguists smoke buildings. (Putnam (1975), 307f.)

Actions are – apart from a certain genre of frightening stories and movies – not reconcilable with dead persons. Further, even though humans smoke things you would never dream about, buildings are certainly not among them. These oddities notwithstanding, a meaningful expression can easily be construed (at least as regards speech) by taking "Dead Linguists" to name a punk-band and "Buildings" to refer to a new brand of cigarettes. However, to understand the sentence this way is to change the grammatical syntax of parts of the expression: "Dead Linguists" is taken as some sort of name of individuals and not as a description; also, the objects of reference are determined differently. Thus, even though the name of the presumed band still means "linguists who are no longer alive", it does not denote each and every dead linguist but designates a group of musicians. Hence, it does not play the same role in [4] as initially supposed.

Finally an example of Carnap's:

[5] Caesar is prime. (Carnap (1931), 227.)

In this case, subject and predicate do not fit together because of categorical incompatibility; their logical syntax does not match, as Carnap would say. Yet "Caesar" could apart from designating a person be taken to be the name of a number (as "Euler") thereby smoothing out the incompatibility.

To sum up, intelligible expressions on this semantic or (more precisely) lexical level have their content constituted by lexical meanings and syntactic configuration apart from

any particular pragmatic context. While on the level of grammar the necessary condition is congruence, the decisive requirement on the semantic level is consistency.

1.4 Third Level: The Role of Practice in Understanding

The third requirement for a proper understanding of sentences which is postulated in Putnam's early writing is paraphrasability. To be able to paraphrase a sentence is to be able to explain the sense of a sentence in different words and thus expressing coherently the context which is relevant for understanding without leaving the language game (Putnam (2001b); Putnam (1999), esp. part II). Complete understanding of a sentence consists in grasping its linguistic meaning (grammar and lexicon) and its truth-evaluable content – what it refers to and the circumstances relevant to its content. While the linguistic meaning of a sentence is independent of particular contexts (even though not of *every* context), the truth-evaluable content is actually determined in particular contexts and situations only. Let us look at some examples illustrating this third requirement for understanding.

The understanding of the sentence,

[6] There is a lot of coffee on the table. (Putnam (1999), 87.)

is constituted by the meanings of the words used in the sentence and by the way they are combined (grammar and lexicon). But grammar and lexicon are not enough for a proper understanding of this sentence. A major issue in Putnam's later view sketched here concerns the reference of the terms and thus the constitution of truth-evaluable content:

> My … examples illustrate how common nouns and adjectives may have very different reference in different contexts *compatibly* with what they "mean." (Putnam (1999), 88)

What the words mean is simply the "literal meaning", or what I preferred to call "lexicon" independently of different contexts. What constitutes full understanding, however, is in Putnam's terms not "meaning" but the "sense" of these terms in a certain context. Hence, while the *meaning* of [6] might be the same in different contexts, its *sense*, or its truth-evaluable content, depends on the actual context of speaking:

> … the truth-evaluable content of the sentence …. is highly occasion sensitive: depending upon the circumstances, the sentence can be used to say that there are many cups of coffee on a contextually definite table …, or that there are bags of coffee stacked on the table …, or that coffee has been spilled on the table … (Putnam (1999), 87f.)

Sense and intelligibility are in question if the context of use is not clear or missing. Even if the "literal meaning" of a sentence is known and determinable, it may be impossible to

understand what is said on a particular occasion (Putnam (1994), 256). Whereas the meaning of words can be detached from their use (and be fixed in a dictionary), the sense of words is connected to their use. Thus, even if the meaning of a sentence, roughly determined by grammar and lexicon, remains the same, reference and truth-relevancy may vary significantly in different conditions or situations.[14] Moreover, pragmatics does not only affect semantics but also the grammar of a sentence. To take the above example [6], depending on the contextual situation the individuation of the reference of the terms turns out to be different. Hence, in one context, the term "coffee" may refer to a continuum (coffee spilled on the table); in others, it may refer to countable units of coffee (cups of coffee, coffee beans, coffee bags).

Albeit the notion of understanding something – and hence of "relevant context", of "circumstances" – can be spelled out and made explicit in particular cases, it is not explicable in full generality and once and for all. There is no complete theoretical treatment of the matter. The claim that the pragmatics of speaking be fully specifiable for all times presupposes the possibility of a God's Eye point of view or an objective perspective, an idea which Putnam resolutely rejects.[15] The same reservation has to be made for claims of unintelligibility: it is not possible to determine the bounds of sense and nonsense once and for all. Thus, when Putnam claims that "logical truths do not have negations that we (presently) understand" (Putnam), 256), the restriction "presently" indicates that the claim can only be held in this generality as long as no alternative logic is available which stands the test of use "in the field".

One objection against this view is ready to hand. For a particular language to be learnable at all, it might seem that a specification or explication of the relevant features of pragmatics must be possible in principle. If the semantics of a language is *radically contextual* and the sense of an expression is wholly determined by each (token of) use, it is impossible to learn this very language. This objection is correct. However, it does not affect the position favoured here, since the present view is contextualist, but not *radically* contextualist. In contrast to radical contextualism, the approach pursued here holds that there are general semantic and grammatical features of linguistic expressions which cannot be re-

[14] See Putnam (2001b); Travis (1997).

[15] See, e.g., Putnam (1981), ch. 1-3; ch. 1 in Putnam (1983); Putnam (1999).

duced to pragmatics. These features determine the meaning of an expression independently from particular occasions of speaking. The pragmatic context, on the other hand, cannot be determined in general but only for specific situations. This irreducibility is owed to the particularity of the situation on the one hand and the language using subject on the other hand. These aspects of pragmatics would collapse if there were a general and universal theory of particular practices. However, learning languages is possible under these circumstances, since the sense of sentences can be determined in particular situations. To be able to learn language, the contextual features contributing to the sense must be specifiable in order to secure the sensicality and the intelligibility of the sentence – *but not once and for all*. Again, this is not to say that it is not possible to indicate what is relevant to the context in a particular situation; all we need is competent speakers, that is speakers who learnt to use the words used and who are able to understand them as used in this particular situation.

There are cases in which the grammatical or the semantic level (or both) are completely irrelevant to full understanding. Thus, we might end up in a corner of the universe in which the local population speaks a language we do not know and yet perfectly understand what is said because we might recognize the structure of practices we are familiar and conversant with. This structure of practices is what Wittgenstein calls "philosophical grammar". Imagine Jim sitting in a train in Turkey and being addressed by the guard controlling his ticket. Even though he does not speak any Turkish, he may understand perfectly that the man is telling him that he was sitting in the wrong compartment.[16] In this example, the well-known "grammar of practice" or, to use another expression of Wittgenstein's, the shared "form of life", which enables understanding, is "travelling by train". Hence the moves of the guard may well be intelligible for Jim. The grammar of a certain practice determines which moves are possible at a certain stage and which moves actually count as moves within the practice.

Let me sum up what proves relevant to understanding language. First, there is an important difference between the meaning of a linguistic expression and its sense. Meaning in Putnam's eyes is determined by two factors on the linguistic side, namely grammar and logical syntax. Sense includes literal (or lexical) meaning but goes beyond mere grammar and lexicon and further entails the relevant pragmatic component. It entails what is called the

[16] This example is James Conant's.

"truth-evaluable content of a sentence". In ordinary cases, competent speakers are able determine what is relevant to understanding a particular linguistic expression in a certain situation. If they understand a sentence spoken in a particular situation, they can determine the practical context which is relevant for their understanding. They are in a position to paraphrase the sentence and to state the relevant conditions for which the sentence is true or false. The question whether it is in fact true can then be evaluated.

Second, the relevant semantics of a sentence cannot be determined once and for all. The pragmatic level is not reducible to semantics. It is possible that the very same words in the very same order acquire a different sense by different use. Thus what Putnam and Travis call the truth-evaluable content of a sentence or its sense may vary vastly in different uses, situations or contexts (Travis (1997); Putnam (2001b)). As Travis (2000) develops at length, this pragmatic view is not restricted to language, but applies to thought as well.

Pragmatic coherence is the third condition of intelligibility, in addition to congruence or well-formedness on the grammatical and consistency on the lexical level in understanding of language.[17] We found it outlined in terms of paraphrasability and ability to imaginatively create discourses and situations in which a certain sentence could be used in Putnam's early paper "Dreaming and 'Depth Grammar'".

Even though the conditions of congruence and consistency are highly relevant for a pragmatic account of understanding, the focus will be on the pragmatic level in the remaining of this book. With this third level understanding definitely transcends the boundaries of traditional views in the philosophy of language. The object of understanding is not merely linguistic forms and their meaning but encompasses situations and practices. It is on this level, on which Putnam launches a new "Sinnkritik".

1.5 Putnam's Unintelligibility Charges

In recent years Putnam attacks various arguments for and against positions in the philosophy of mind and in epistemology by claiming certain sentences used in these arguments to

[17] In conversation Hilary Putnam is very strict in using "context" exclusively in connection with pragmatic aspects of semantics. I use the term in a more relaxed way and address not only pragmatic aspects of language in use but of practical situations generally.

be ("ultimately") unintelligible. Let me shortly consider three of these unintelligibility arguments, an argument against positions in the philosophy of mind, an argument against scepticism in epistemology, and an argument against idealistic worries concerning realism. All of these arguments, to be intelligible, bank on a notion of coherent practices and how we acquire them which has only been sketched (Section 1.4) as yet and has to be developed in more detail later on (mainly in 3 and 4). What I would like to draw your attention to here is the characteristics of Putnam's arguments. Note that my aim is not to defend Putnam's unintelligibility claims even though it will be obvious to the reader that I am strongly convinced that Putnam is right in these cases. I am rather up to introducing Putnam's way of doing philosophy in recent years, which draws heavily on the distinction of the three levels of understanding I developed in the foregoing sections. In order to understand Putnam's way of philosophizing we will have to deepen our understanding of the role of practice in understanding in the following chapters.

In his Royce Lectures on *Mind and Body*, Putnam explicitly claims *"*that neither the standard problems in the philosophy of mind nor the 'philosophical positions' they give rise to are really intelligible" (Putnam (1999), 112). His target is not primarily these positions and claims, but rather "a certain philosophical approach the arguments I am criticizing represent" (Putnam (1999), 110). To back up this claim, Putnam focuses on arguments given in Kim (1995). Against Davidson's *Anomalous Monism*, Kim argues in favour of *Strong Supervenience* of mental properties on physical properties. *Supervenience* in the philosophy of mind assumes a certain dependence of the mental on the physical. It is introduced by Davidson in the following way: "… there cannot be two events alike in all physical respects but differing in some mental respect, or that an object cannot alter in some mental respect without altering in some physical respect." (Davidson (1986a), 214.) The dependence between the mental and the physical can be taken in weaker and stronger versions, depending on the interpretation of the "cannot's" in the above characterization of supervenience. Kim's strong version might be stated thus:

> Mental properties *strongly supervene* on physical properties iff for any possible worlds w_1 and w_2 and for any individuals x_1 in w_1 and x_2 in w_2 if x_1 is not discernible from x_2 in regard of physical properties then x_1 and x_2 are not discernible in regard of mental properties.[18]

[18] See Kim (1995). *Weak Supervenience* does not include supervenience across possible words but holds only for individuals in the same possible world.

Anomalous Monism (AM), on the other hand, holds, firstly, that every mental event is identical with a physical event *(Monism)* and, secondly, that this identity is an identity between tokens of mental and physical events, not of types *(Anomality)*.[19] *Monism* avoids the major problem of Cartesian Dualism which concerns the *commercium mentis et corporis*, namely the question how mental events can be causally efficient in the physical world – since mental events, in this view, are identical with physical events, the question does not arise: the laws of causal efficiency are physical and not psychological laws. Davidson's Monism is *anomal* since it holds that, while every mental event token is identical with a physical event token, there is no such identity between types of mental events and types of physical events. This is to say that there are no general psychophysical laws governing the relation between mental and physical properties; hence, according to Davidson, mental properties are not reducible to, or theoretically explainable by, physical properties. If Davidson is right that there are not psychophysical laws, then the mental is not satisfactorily explainable (or reducible) by the physical in terms of supervenience. This is what brings Kim up against Davidson: supervenience requires psychophysical laws to have explanatory value. In Kim's eyes, one consequence of Davidson being right that there are no psychophysical laws would be that mental phenomena are of no more than epiphenomal value. As a consequence it would be possible that:

[7] There could be soulless automata or zombies, or in other words: it is possible that certain people do not have any mental properties, but all of their physical properties are the same as if they did and their physical environments are the same. (Cp. Putnam (1999), 83.)

In other words, Kim fears that if Davidson is right about the anomality of the relation between the mental and the physical, it could be that there were Zombies or soulless automata. At this point, Putnam intervenes. He claims that [7] is not fully intelligible. What does he mean by this? First, note that [7] is not contested on grammatical or lexical level. There is nothing wrong with the grammar of [7]. Neither are the lexical meanings of the words inconsistent. Putnam agrees that the words used to state [7] show up in various contexts and make perfect sense there. Since the sentence is grammatically well-formed and lexically consistent, Putnam does not claim the sentence to be unintelligible altogether, but not fully intelligible. But things get fishy as soon as the pragmatic level is taken into focus.

[19] Anomalous Monism is introduced in the paper "Mental Events" in Davidson (1986a), 207–227.

Putnam claims that there is no adequate pragmatic context which would allow an understanding of what is said. While contexts in which [7] may make sense can rather easily be given (Putnam mentions a political case of racism and suppression in which certain people are said to have no mental properties and an ironic description of bureaucrats (Putnam (1999), 89–91)), it is not clear what it would be for [7] to be true neither as a statement of how the world is nor as a statement in philosophy (Putnam (1999), 90). Indeed, Putnam's critique of [7] is based on an even more fundamental critique on modern philosophy's conception of the relation between soul (or mind) and body (Putnam (1999), 93–8). Some of the ideas in philosophy of mind, the idea that soul and mind are completely immaterial, for instance, which appear in Descartes as well as in Augustine, draw from uses of "soul" and "mind" in religious contexts. These religious contexts, however, cannot be the measure for philosophical uses. "Purely *religious* uses of the word *soul"*, Putnam holds, "leave one completely free to accept or reject *philosophical* talk of the soul as 'completely immaterial'" (Putnam (1999), 97). Hence, Putnam concludes that the illusion that [7] is intelligible comes from religious practices of talking and religious uses of words terms "soul". Transferring these terms soaked through with religious practice into philosophical practice does not feed philosophical understanding but bears absurd or paradox consequences like the one stated in [7]. Putnam's way out is to claim that with the uses these terms have in philosophical practice, one cannot make sense of the idea of mental properties being separable from physical properties. Putnam's problems to understand [7] in particular and Cartesian separation of mind and body in general, root in the fact that relevant notions in use are taken from various contexts, particularly religious contexts, and simply transferred into a philosophical context in which the notions lack adequate practical usage. In a nutshell, religious concepts present inadequate tools for the solution of philosophical problems.

The second argument I would like to draw your attention to is an argument for the incoherence or unintelligibility of pervasive sceptical claims. The type of incriminated claims is this:

[8] Everything we believe to know might, in fact, be false and error.[20]

Such claims express deep rooted epistemological scepticism. Note that the idea is not that everything we believe to know *is*, in fact, false and error, but rather that there is a certain

[20] This sort of scepticism is discussed at length in Putnam (2001b).

possibility, be it small and almost negligible, that everything we believe to know might be false – even if it never really turns out to be false or even if it cannot possibly turn out to be false. The point is that we just do not know for sure, that in any case there remains an inkling of doubt. And since we do not know for sure, this might be the case with simply *everything* we believe to know. Hence also, we should not, or only in very limited cases, use words like "knowledge" or "to know".

There are two main issues Putnam advances against the intelligibility of [8]. The first is contextual coherence: knowledge claims are bound to contexts. Knowledge, in other words, is contextual or bound to the practice in which it is used, and so are justification and warrant. My knowledge that there is milk in the fridge at home is perfectly justified, since this morning I saw some there. This counts as knowledge even tough it might be that a thirsty burglar who broke into my house drank it up five minutes ago while I am in the office. In everyday context of use this is just what we call "I know that …". In scientific practice, on the other hand, standards and restrictions concerning what could count as knowledge or as well supported and justified belief are much more sophisticated. In addition to this, the standards of justification vary in different sciences.

The second line of argument challenges the reasonability of doubt. Under normal circumstances, Putnam claims, it would be quirky to challenge my knowledge claim concerning milk in my fridge. It would be even stranger to call Einstein's theory of relativity into question, except for very good reasons. As knowledge claim need to be justified, challenging knowledge claims requires sufficient reasons. What counts as sufficient reason for doubt, again, is dependent on the context, or the practice in which the challenge is raised.

Let me emphasize that the scepticism Putnam envisages and which he sees expressed in [8] is not the sort of methodological we find in Descartes,[21] since the latter eventually overcomes his doubts in the face of reasons he is willing to judge good. Descartes' doubts are his method to advance his investigation. In contrast to this, the scepticism Putnam has in mind is pathological for it is designed not to be overthrown by any reason. I am tempted to call such an incorrigible position a philosophical disorder (in case of decontextualizing scepticism one might properly qualify it as compulsive sceptical disorder).

In sum, concerning [8] Putnam calls two things into question. First, the sceptic's claim is of a generality which aims to cover each and every context in which knowledge claims

[21] See the first two of his Meditationes (Descartes (1897))

occur. By this, the sense of [8] itself is totally decontextualized. An idea Putnam counters by claiming that there is no sense without context. And there neither any Full Coverage Super-Context in which such a general claim would make sense. Second, the sceptic can provide no sufficient reason to challenge all knowledge claims in all contexts. Doubts, as knowledge claims, are bound to context and for both we have to have our reasons. It is, to give it a Brandomian flavour, part of our practice to give and ask for reasons for doubt as well as for reclaiming knowledge. What counts as a good reason, on the other hand, is itself dependent on the context or practice in which it comes into place. There is no reason for overall doubts (at least not in philosophy). All-embracing scepticism does not cohere with any practice, let alone a philosophical practice. Thus it is incoherent not only as a philosophical position but as an attitude .[22]

A similar epistemological angst turns up in the Brains-in-a-Vat scenario, Putnam's version of the problem of the external world:

[9] We might all be Brains in a Vat (BiV). (Putnam (1981), chapter 1)

Putnam discusses this claim on a semantic basis by analyzing what the terms used might refer to. The purpose of the story is to make it plausible that assuming a certain picture of mental representation and of mental access to the world we could all be brains in a vat. Or, in terms of understanding rather than of mental representation: if our understanding is merely a mental happening in the sense that understanding linguistic expressions is merely a psychological manipulation of mental signs; and if human access to reality is merely causal so that some computing machine could in principle be able to trigger our nerve endings in a way that we get the impression of living in the world we know and that our experience of the world is just like it now actually is (even the world in which the computer is situated in may be completely different); then, for all we know, we could be brains in a vat (even if we never be able find out about it). Hence, the story maintains, we cannot be certain that our mental representation or our understanding of language tells us something substantial about the world we live in. For all we know, it might even be that we all live in a yellow submarine.

I do not want to discuss this problem further here. What I want to draw your attention to is how Putnam, in the late seventies and early eighties, struggles for an adequate inter-

[22] For Putnam on scepticism see Putnam (1998a), Putnam (1998b), and Putnam (2001b).

pretation of his results. In *Reason, Truth, and History*, it is obvious that Putnam is seeking a proper way to deal with [9]. He claims that from his considerations of the Brains-in-a-Vat scenario one should conclude that the sentence "We are Brains in a Vat" is necessarily false (Putnam (1981), 15). The reason for this claim to be necessarily false is that it is, as Putnam says, "in a certain way, self-refuting" (Putnam (1981), 7). This "certain way" of being self-refuting is spelled out by declaring the scenario to be "incoherent" (e.g. on pp. 22, 131) and the notions it is based on to be "confused" (p. 21). At the same time Putnam is clear that his argument is not properly called a "conceptual" one, since this "makes it all sound like *inquiry about the meaning of words*. And that is not at all what we have been engaging in" (p. 16). He obviously is not yet endued with the notional and argumentative tools to deal with [9] properly. It is striking that at just this point, Putnam uses Kantian terms to explain his reasoning:

> What we have been doing is considering the *preconditions* for *thinking about, representing, referring to*, etc. We have investigated these preconditions *not* by investigating the meaning of these words and phrases … but by *reasoning a priori.* Not in the old 'absolute' sense (since we don't claim that magical theories of reference are *a priori* wrong), but in the sense of inquiring into what is *reasonably* possible *assuming* certain general premises, or making certain very broad theoretical assumptions. (Putnam (1981), 16.)

As Kant, Putnam seeks a middle way between the *empirical* and the *a priori* by pursuing a goal which is, in Putnam's own eyes (see also p. 16), similar to Kant's goals in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. While Kant's focus is on the conditions of possibility of experience, Putnam's is conditions of possibility of thinking and speaking. The "certain way" in which [9] is declared to be necessarily false can be specified further in the light of Kantian terminology. It is evident that Putnam is not claiming [9] to be *analytically* false in the way contradictions like "all bachelors are married men" are false. What Putnam has in mind is rather the way in which negations of judgements which are synthetic a priori would be false. At this point, however, the inherited terminology which goes back to the early days of analytic philosophy turns out to be misleading or simply wrong. Kant prefers to speak of "validity" rather than truth in connection with judgements which he claims to be *a priori* (e.g. Kant (1990), B 4) and what he calls "knowledge" or "Erkenntnis" contains truth, so to say. A false *Erkenntnis* would simply not be an *Erkenntnis*. Hence also, there is, in Kant, nothing like a *false* synthetic judgement *a priori*. We might say that in a priori cases, be they analytic or synthetic, error is not brought into the judgement and sort of remains in it. Rather error happens in the synthesis. The result is not a false judgement; rather we fail to

make a valid judgement in such cases. In a Kantian framework, the notion of a "necessarily false judgement" makes no sense. We find an analogy concerning the understanding of sentences. The failure to judge validly in Kant is Putnam's failure to understand properly. Thus, if understanding fails in discussed cases [1] to [9] it is simply misleading to declare the relevant sentences as false. Such sentences are not false in the same sense as:

[10] The number of planets in our solar system is two.

If in the discussed sentences understanding fails, it does not fail in describing the world incorrectly, the world simply being different than these sentences say it is. Something is wrong with these sentences in a more fundamental sense – they are not "grammatically false" but incongruent, not "syntactically false" but inconsistent, not "pragmatically false" but pragmatically incoherent. Failure of intelligibility is failure on at least one of these levels. If Due to the fact that the sentences are in conflict with fundamental preconditions of our practices of thinking, speaking and acting – *pace* Putnam (1981) –, they are not necessarily false but simply unintelligible. This is a lesson the author of *Reason, Truth, and History* had yet to learn in later years. And since claims as [7], [8], or [9] do not fail to be intelligible for grammatical or lexical reasons but only for pragmatic reasons, they are not unintelligible altogether but just "not fully intelligible".

To arrive at the insight that that there is an important difference between sentences which simply fail to describe reality correctly (and hence are false) on the one hand, and sentences which are grammatically incongruent, lexically inconsistent or pragmatically incoherent on the other hand, we need to take a closer look at the notion of understanding.

1.6 "Sinnkritik": Early Wittgenstein and Carnap

Putnam's claim that certain philosophical theses or positions do not make sense seems to have prominent forerunners not only in Kant but also in the early Wittgenstein and in Carnap. However, as will become clear in the following, Putnam's agenda diverges fundamentally from both of the latter's projects.

The early Wittgenstein's declared aim in the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (henceforth: *TLP*)[23] is the following:

[23] Quoted in accord with Wittgenstein (1989).

> Das Buch will also dem Denken eine Grenze ziehen, oder vielmehr – nicht dem Denken sondern dem Ausdruck der Gedanken: Denn, um dem Denken eine Grenze zu ziehen, müssten wir beide Seiten dieser Grenze denken können (wir müssten also denken können, was sich nicht denken lässt). Die Grenze wird also nur in der Sprache gezogen werden können und was jenseits der Grenze liegt, wird einfach Unsinn sein. (*TLP*, p. 9)

The programme of the Tractatus is to determine what can be thought. This project seems paradoxical since we cannot think the unthinkable, and hence we cannot really draw a line between what can and what cannot be thought. The project, therefore, aims at drawing a line between what is expressible and what is not. What is expressible makes sense. What is not expressible is simply nonsense.

The view of language developed in *TLP is* described as follows:

> Nun scheint es möglich zu sein, die allgemeinste Satzform anzugeben: das heisst, eine Beschreibung der Sätze irgendeiner Zeichensprache zu geben, so dass jeder mögliche Sinn durch ein Symbol, auf welches die Beschreibung passt, ausgedrückt werden kann, und dass jedes Symbol, worauf die Beschreibung passt, einen Sinn ausdrücken kann, wenn die Bedeutungen der Namen entsprechend gewählt werden. Es ist klar, dass bei der Beschreibung der allgemeinsten Satzform nur ihr Wesentliches beschrieben werden darf, – sonst wäre sie nämlich nicht die allgemeinste. Dass es eine allgemeine Satzform gibt, wird dadurch bewiesen, dass es keinen Satz geben darf, dessen Form man nicht hätte voraussehen (d.h. konstruieren) können. Die allgemeine Form des Satzes ist: Es verhält sich so und so. (Wittgenstein, *TLP* 4.5.)

The general form of sentences[24] is: "such and such is the case". This is the most general form each and every sentence exhibits. It is common to all sentences. Any symbol displaying such a form, or fitting into such a form, may express a sense. It indeed expresses a particular sense provided the references of names are chosen to express it. Hence, in the early Wittgenstein, the sense a symbol expresses is determined by its form and the reference of its names.

For the early Wittgenstein, the general form of sentences determines the necessary structure of any sentence or in other words the necessary formal conditions all sentences have to comply with. If a sentence does not exhibit this form then it is simply not a sentence, it is nonsense. It remains nonsense on any assignment of reference to its names.

Speaking of "possible senses", Wittgenstein does not intend to claim that there is a special kind of senses, possible senses. Wittgenstein rather claims that *every* sense is possible. There is a totality of what makes sense. This totality is determined by all sentences

[24] "Satz" in *TLP* is often, as in Ogden's translation, translated with "proposition"; in Anscombe's translation of *PU*, however, the translation is "sentence". In accordance with Anscombe I translate "Satz" as "sentence" throughout.

complying with the general form. With all possible forms, all possible senses are given. Therefore, every (possible) sense can be expressed in a certain form. If all that possibly makes sense is determined once and for all, then also what is nonsensical must be determined in advance and in absolute independence.

As there is a totality of all possible senses, there is a totality of possible forms of sentences, and, it seems, a totality of all possible languages based on signs (Zeichensprache). Hence, the general form of sentences, "such and such is the case", determines the form of all possible sentences in all languages, since there is no sentence that makes sense but is not of that form. It is not possible that a sense can be expressed without its possibility or its form already being couched in the general form of sentences. Those languages, which are possible, differ only in the signs used, not in their forms. They all aim at a description of the world, or, as TLP 6.53 holds, they are all scientific sentences. There can be no language which differs in any significant way, in expressive power, for instance.

The conception of what makes sense in *TLP* affects also the account of mind and reality. Wittgenstein's early conception of mind exhibits the same structure as reality; both these structures further comply with the structure of what makes sense,[25] complications reminiscent of a pre-established harmony à la Leibniz.[26]

One of the sharpest critics of the early Wittgenstein is the later Wittgenstein.[27] The latter dispenses himself from the quest for the general form of all possible sense, or sentences. In

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[25] Rust claims that the early Wittgenstein is a proponent of a "mechanistischen Konzeption des Geistes, nach der dieser [i.e. der Geist] die genau gleiche Struktur aufweist wie die Welt" (Rust (1996), 50); see Rust (1996), 49: "Die Struktur der Bedeutung entspricht einer Struktur des Geistes. … Alles, was in der Welt anders sein könnte, wäre auch im Mechanismus des Geistes anders kombinierbar."

[26] Wittgenstein himself spoke of a pre-established harmony, see the quotation from the "Big Typescript" (Wittgenstein (2000), item 213) in Hacker (2000), 353. See also Rust (1996), 49.

[27] Let me shortly comment on a discussion initiated by Cora Diamond and James Conant (see their papers in Crary and Read (eds.) (2000)). These authors defend the thesis that Wittgenstein did not really put forward his ideas in the TLP in the sense of hinting at ultimately ineffable truths by "trying to whistle" them, but that he expressed them in some sort of therapeutic consciousness in order to demonstrate the unavoidable failure of the vain endeavour to attain metaphysical truth. This thesis is inspired by Cavell (1979). I share the view that the early Wittgenstein's approach is to some extent ironically distorted and that it is indeed directed against a sort of illusive metaphysics put forward in the TLP. I therefore accord with Conant and Diamond in that TLP 6.53 and 6.54 attack all that is said in the TLP, jettisoning also

PU, he admits that it might seem as if he shirks from defining the essential core of the picture of language lying behind his talk of language games, the essence of language.

> Hier stossen wir auf die grosse Frage, die hinter allen diesen Betrachtungen steht. Denn man könnte mir einwenden: "Du machst dir's leicht! Du redest von allen möglichen Sprachspielen, hast aber nirgends gesagt, was denn das Wesentliche des Sprachspiels, und also der Sprache, ist. Was allen diesen Vorgängen gemeinsam ist und sie zur Sprache, oder zu Teilen der Sprache macht. Du schenkst dir also gerade den Teil der Untersuchung, der dir selbst seinerzeit das meiste Kopfzerbrechen gemacht hat, nämlich den, die *allgemeine Form des Satzes* und der Sprache betreffend."
> Und das ist wahr. – Statt etwas anzugeben, was allem, was wir Sprache nennen, gemeinsam ist, sage ich, es ist diesen Erscheinungen gar nicht Eines gemeinsam, weswegen wir für alle das gleiche Wort verwenden, – sondern sie sind miteinander in vielen verschiedenen Weisen *verwandt. …*
> (Wittgenstein, *PU* 65.)

The reason that he does not address the question as to the common core of all those language games is that he believes that there is not only one single kind of reason for which all these phenomena are labelled with the same name.[28] Finding an answer to this question was central to the *TLP*. In *PU*, however, the strategy is completely different from the very start.

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what Wittgenstein aims at showing by what he says (or "whistles"). But the essence of the interpretation Diamond and Conant are putting forward is that the early Wittgenstein is fully aware of the fact that "what we can't say, we can't say, and we can't whistle it either". If this is correct, then all he claims in the TLP is not only without meaning and sense, but simply nonsense ("Unsinn"). They further suggest, that the discontinuities that are traditionally pointed out between Wittgenstein's earlier and later periods have been overly exaggerated. As a consequence, this interpretation holds that Wittgenstein's conception of philosophy did not change so much. While I do think that Wittgenstein's TLP has to be taken with a pinch of salt at various places, and while I do think that the later Wittgenstein's position can be reached from the formers view essentially by jettisoning just one central idea only, namely that there is one universal function of language, it seems overly exaggerated to attribute Wittgenstein a thoroughly ironic treatment of matters. Nevertheless, in the present study it is not relevant which position one takes as regards the continuity of Wittgenstein's thought if we leave open whether the ideas we find expressed in TLP really are or are not the early Wittgenstein's.

[28] One might hold that what is common to all is "family resemblance". This feature is not the reason why any of these phenomena is called by a certain name, though. Things are is the other way round: the kinship of reasons for calling the phenomena the same gives us reason to speak of family resemblance. See Austin's paper "The Meaning of a Word", part III, for a discussion of various sorts of rational kinship (collected in Austin (1966), 55-75).

The later Wittgenstein rejects the view that there must be one form common to all sentences, and the idea of an essence of language that goes with that view. This essentialist idea is already targeted in *PU* § 1 and remains in the centre of critique from there on:

> "In diesen Worten erhalten wir, so scheint es mir, ein bestimmtes Bild von dem Wesen der menschlichen Sprache. Nämlich dieses: Die Wörter benennen Gegenstände – Sätze sind Verbindungen von solchen Benennungen" (*PU*, §1).

The focus of critique is not primarily the idea that words could in principle name objects. It is rather that Wittgenstein now objects the claim that naming objects is a constitutive or essential trait of language. By way of examples, he intends to show there being various ways words are used. Among the diversity of functions words play in language, we find the function of naming objects. In the same way, language displays various forms of sentences, and one of these forms is the form of fact-stating or descriptive sentences. Furthermore, there may be languages that differ in significant respects. Languages may differ in function or in expressive power. In later years, Wittgenstein holds that there is a plurality of languages which differ in various ways. The well-known label for such differing languages is "language games".

The early Wittgenstein was convinced that descriptive sentences exhibit the general form of all sentences paradigmatically. In later years, he did not even acknowledge a primary status to sentences of this form. This idea, namely that the primary function of sentences is to represent and picture reality, is predominant in the *TLP*. It presents the basis of the idea of a pre-established harmony between mind, language, and world. With the refection of the general form of sentences, this harmony is abandoned also. This abandonment finds expression in Wittgenstein's claim that if we state a fact and mean to state it, we do not stop anywhere short of the fact (*PU* § 95).

A further difference between his views is that the later Wittgenstein contends his earlier idea that there are totalities which are fixed in advance: a totality of all possible senses, a totality of all possible sentences, a totality of languages, a totality of functions of words or sentences, etc. Language, he later holds, is open, it may change, there is nothing fixed in advance, not even the sense of a particular sentence. It is not even the case that a certain form of a sentence determines the function of this sentence since a sentence of the form "such and such is the case" may occur in a story which does not aim at a description of how things are and does not even aim at truth (or falsity), it just plays a certain role in the

story. Hence, even though it has exactly the same form as fact-stating sentences, it does not serve to state facts.

In the later Wittgenstein, the sense of a sentence is not dependent only on properties which are inherent to the sentence, like its form or the words which occur in it and their meaning. The sense of a sentence is further dependent on the way it is used in a certain situation and this use is open. The sense of a sentence cannot be determined in advance. Moreover, it is not possible to determine all possible uses of a sentence. Hence, it is not possible to determine once and for all what can make sense and what cannot. Contrary to the early Wittgenstein, the totality of what makes sense is not construable in advance and the form of the linguistic expression is not essential for the expression of a particular sense. The sense of a linguistic expression is dependent not only on the linguistic form, but also on the pragmatic context.

The shift from the early to the later Wittgenstein is sedimented in his shift from logic to grammar. In order to avoid the idea of meaning being determined independently of any use whatsoever, or of independent propositions, Wittgenstein avoids talk of "logic" in favour of "(philosophical) grammar". This latter term is closer to language and far from any "shadowy" conception of propositions (cp. Travis (2000), 1). Within his account of meaning as use, "grammar" is not exactly the linguistic grammar encountered earlier, but is indeed meant to capture the pragmatic aspects of the use of linguistic expression. The notion captures the idea that there are important philosophical restrictions to the combinations of terms which go beyond purely syntactic or semantic restrictions.

The lines of critique the later Wittgenstein raises against his former self are in their main traits identical to the critique the later Putnam raises in his unintelligibility arguments.[29] Both authors agree in their views of language and making sense. Both choose to argue for a plurality of language games or of functions of language. They both argue that pragmatics is highly relevant for something to make sense. And they both argue for the impossibility to determine a totality of what possibly makes sense, of what could count as a possible use of language, or of what is a possible situation of use.

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[29] See e.g. his critique of the "metaphysical fantasy … that there is a totality of Forms, or Universals, or "properties," fixed once and for all, and that every possible meaning of a word corresponds to one of these Forms or Universals or properties. The structure of all possible thoughts is fixed in advance – fixed by the Forms" (Putnam (1999), 6).

Carnap proposed to apply what may be called "Sinnkritik" to philosophical stances in a similar tone as the early Wittgenstein (see Carnap (1931); Carnap (1968)). Carnap claims that a linguistic expression is nonsensical either if it either violates logical syntax or if some expression used lacks sense. A violation of syntax can be found, for instance, in "Caesar is prime", while we are confronted with a lack of meaning if we introduce a neologism like "blitiri" in "Carnap is blitiri", or "nichtet" in "Das Nichts nichtet". It may be also the case that a word has lost its meaning in the course of time, as, for instance, ontological uses of "principle" (Carnap (1931), 224f).

As is clear from what has been said in criticizing the early Wittgenstein, the sort of "Sinnkritik" Putnam and the later Wittgenstein have in mind differs fundamentally from the "Sinnkritik" Carnap pursues. Carnap's account of sensefulness, as the early Wittgenstein's account, lacks the pragmatic level developed here. His critique focuses on "logical syntax" and thus remains on the second level I termed "lexicon" here. As was said before, with Putnam and the later Wittgenstein I take it that a substantial critique of metaphysical doctrines must be raised on the level of pragmatics (or the "grammar of practice" as one might say echoing the later Wittgenstein).

To sum up, the relevance of the disclosure of linguistic expressions which do not make any sense lies in the exclusion of certain combinations of words from language:

> Zu sagen "Diese Wortverbindung hat keinen Sinn" schliesst sie aus dem Bereich der Sprache aus und umgrenzt dadurch das Gebiet der Sprache. Wenn man aber eine Grenze zieht, so kann das verschiedenerlei Gründe haben. Wenn ich einen Platz mit einem Zaun, einem Strich, oder sonst irgendwie umziehe, so kann das den Zweck haben, jemand nicht hinaus, oder nicht hinein zu lassen; es kann aber auch zu einem Spiel gehören und die Grenze soll etwa von den Spielern übersprungen werden; oder es kann andeuten, wo der Besitz eines Menschen aufhört und der des andern anfängt; etc. Ziehe ich also eine Grenze so ist damit noch nicht gesagt, weshalb ich sie ziehe.
> Wenn gesagt wird ein Satz sei sinnlos, so ist nicht, quasi sein Sinn sinnlos. Sondern eine Wortverbindung wird aus der Sprache ausgeschlossen, aus dem Verkehr gezogen. (*PU*, §§ 499–500)

Wittgenstein in the TLP holds that tautologies and contradictions do not say anything, they lack sense (they are "sinnlos"), as much as they lack truth conditions (TLP 4.461). In *PU*, as is obvious in the quoted passage above, Wittgenstein holds that there are sentences which for another reason do not have sense. This is just the sense in which Putnam speaks of incoherence. While the words which are combined to a contradiction are inconsistently put together, and do not fit together for logical reasons, combinations of words which lack

sense do not cohere, they do not fit together for pragmatic reasons. Such combinations of words have to be withdrawn from circulation (see *PU*, § 500, cited above).

1.7 Pragmatic Understanding and Learning Language

In the first paragraphs of *PU*, Wittgenstein articulates fundamental critique concerning Augustine's view of language functioning and language learning as he finds it displayed in the passage from *Confessiones* I.8, cited in the first paragraph of the *Investigations*:

> ... cum ipsi (majores homines) appellabant rem aliquam, et cum secundum eam vocem corpus ad aliquid movebant, videbam, et tenebam hoc ab eis vocari rem illam, quod sonabant, cum eam vellent ostendere. Hoc autem eos velle ex motu corporis aperiebatur: tamquam verbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt vultu et nutu oculorum, ceterorumque membrorum actu, et sonitu vocis indicante affectionem animi in petendis, habendis, reiciendis, fugiendisve rebus. Ita verba in variis sententiis locis suis posita, et crebro audita, quarum rerum signa essent, paulatim colligebam, measque iam voluntates, edomito in eis signis ore, per haec enuntiabam.
>
> [Nannten die Erwachsenen irgend einen Gegenstand und wandten sie sich dabei ihm zu, so nahm ich das wahr und ich begriff, dass der Gegenstand durch die Laute, die sie aussprachen, bezeichnet wurde, da sie auf ihn hinweisen wollten. Dies aber entnahm ich aus ihren Gebärden, der natürlichen Sprache aller Völker, der Sprache, die durch Mienen und Augenspiel, durch die Bewegungen der Glieder und den Klang der Stimme die Empfindungen der Seele anzeigt, wenn diese irgend etwas begehrt, oder festhält, oder zurückweist, oder flieht. So lernte ich nach und nach verstehen, welche Dinge die Wörter bezeichneten, die ich wieder und wieder, an ihren bestimmten Stellen in verschiedenen Sätzen, aussprechen hörte. Und ich brachte, als nun mein Mund sich an diese Zeichen gewöhnt hatte, durch sie meine Wünsche zum Ausdruck.] (*PU*, § 1).

Wittgenstein's main points of critique are raised in the paragraphs immediately following § 1. Still we find remarks on the issues scattered all over *PU*. The following aspects of the Augustinian account[30] are in the focus of this critique.

Augustine describes a certain system of communication, namely one in which the function of language is to name middle-sized dry goods and persons in the first place, while reference to actions and properties is secondary. In the passage quoted from Augustine, the child does not need to acquire the meaning and reference of its words and the complex sense of sentences. These are only described as the expressions of her will and thoughts. Hence, the child only needs to manage two things to learn a language. Firstly, she

[30] Speaking of "the Augustinian account", I do not want to claim that Augustine really held this position, but only that in the passage quoted by Wittgenstein we find the criticized account thus suggested and attributed to Augustine.

needs to associate the correct expressions with the intended objects and the thoughts and intentions she developed in mind, and secondly she has to learn to articulate these word forms correctly in speaking. Language provides the bare means to express thoughts. Thinking and other mental activities are primary and independent from their expression. They take place already before language is acquired – all language learning is the learning of a second language since the child already masters a first language, a lingua mentis. Hence, the child appears to be a homunculus with a complete ready-made inner world of thoughts and will, feelings and emotions. She is a completely developed little subject or person, someone who has distinguished and differentiated wishes on her own and, to become a grown-up, merely needs to learn to associate the right sounds to name the objects and goings-on around her and to refer to her inner states of mind, affections, and desires, to communicate them to others. Everything is in place already – what goes on inside of her and what goes on around her – these ready-made inner and outer objects have to be baptized only. From the very beginning the child is taken to be able to perceive an outer world of ready-made objects and properties which are just there to be associated with linguistic expressions by ostension. The idea is that of a well-established, ready-made furniture of the outer and the inner world with sounds or words establishing only connections and combinations, leaving everything else as it is.

In the first thirty paragraphs of *PU*, Wittgenstein spends a lot of energy to show that this picture of language acquisition as an association of thoughts with linguistic expressions is inadequate. Wittgenstein does not simply claim that the Augustinian picture is wrong, but that it is inappropriate as an account of all functioning of language. Still, the problem with the Augustinian account is not only the description of how language works but much more the underlying idea of what it means for a child to learn a language.

For Wittgenstein one of the crucial mistakes of Augustine lies in neglecting the difference between learning a first language and second languages:

> Wer in ein fremdes Land kommt, wird manchmal die Sprache der Einheimischen durch hinweisende Erklärungen lernen, die sie ihm geben; und er wird die Deutung dieser Erklärungen of *raten* müssen und manchmal richtig, manchmal falsch raten. Und nun können wir, glaube ich, sagen: Augustinus beschreibe das Lernen der menschlichen Sprache so, als käme das Kind in ein fremdes Land und verstehe die Sprache des Landes nicht; das heisst: so als habe es bereits eine Sprache, nur nicht diese. Oder auch: als könne das Kind schon *denken*, nur noch nicht sprechen. Und "denken" hiesse hier etwas, wie: zu sich selber reden. (Wittgenstein (1958), §32.)

Wittgenstein clearly rejects any account which assumes ready-made objects either in mind, language or reality, and which pictures language acquisition as an establishing of the correct harmony between these realms. The situation of the learner of a first language is essentially different from the situation of those already mastering a language. In case of learning a second language, we can describe using language as the "transmission of information and meaning". In learning a second language we have a guess what is meant, and in some cases we may be right. In the case of learning a first language, however, the very bits and pieces of information have to be developed first, concepts have to be formed, objects have to be determined. The learner of a first language is not in a position to guess. The idea that these bits and pieces are already there for the learner and only have to be associated with words and objects is completely misleading.

The Augustinian description may be appropriate for (the beginning of) the acquisition of a foreign language, at least if it is not too distant from the native language as regards its grammatical, lexical, and pragmatic structures. With good right, learning to understand a second language starts out from middle-sized dry goods of daily usage which are addressed by ostension and by learning to take notice of the specific sounds associated with them in the foreign language and to pronounce these sounds correctly. To express our thoughts in the foreign language we just need the right words (and the appropriate skills to form grammatically correct sentences out of them). Concerning languages which are in this sense "close", individual words of the new language are attributed to already well-known ones as far as possible and explained in view of them. Even close languages, however, as English, German, or French sometimes differ in relevant respects.[31] Language acquisition in the Augustinian picture amounts to the appropriation or development of a simple translation manual. There are no problems concerning the individuation neither of words, of things, nor of subjective psychological objects in the Augustinian view.

Wittgenstein's critique of the Augustinian picture of learning language at base reclaims a missing sensitivity to pragmatics. Augustine assumes ready-made external objects language refers to. He further assumes ready-made inner objects like sensations or desires. To neglect pragmatics in an account of language learning bears the consequence of a blurring of relevant differences between learning first languages and learning second languages. To

[31] See Putnam's short remarks on "mind", "Geist" and "esprit" in Putnam (2004), 50f.

learn her first language a little child has to develop a host of skills that at first glance have not much to do with learning language (perceiving, recognizing, playing (simple) games, coordinate bodily movements, articulate sounds). An analysis of learning languages must be considerate of the role of language within practices. Linguistic expressions, to make sense, are dependent on practice. Further, whole semantic fields, including expressions grammatical and logical structures, are applicable in various different practices. What is addressed as "learning of languages" therefore must take place on all of the three levels identified in chapter 1: grammar, lexicon, and pragmatics.

In his considerations on translation, Quine indeed carves out the same difference between learning a first and learning a second language without mentioning it (see Quine (1960) and the title essay of Quine (1969)). What Quine calls "radical translation" amounts to learning a language including its pragmatic basis from scratch. Word for word translations do not carry far. The meaning of a word does not consist solely in the objects of reference of expressions. As an example, Quine discusses a certain classifying particle in Japanese for which there is no appropriate translation in English (Quine (1969), 35–8).

Quine's field linguist trying to make sense of "gavagai" utterances already masters a language (see Quine (1960) or the title essay of Quine (1969)). Her challenge is to translate the foreign language into her own. As Quine shows, this view leads to semantic indeterminacy as well as to ontological relativity. The idea of access to nature from an objective point of view, goes by the board; only the structure of nature remains relevant, while all real content slips through (Quine (1992)). Still, the learner in Quine's view already masters a language and the various practices it is interwoven with. Hence, Quine's radical translator is not exactly in the position of the learner of a first language. Her situation is not the first learner's; she simply is confronted with a language and with practices she is completely unacquainted with. Quine discusses the complications of such a situation and ultimately concludes that, in effect, we all are in such a situation all the time: "radical translation begins at home" (Quine (1969), 46). Thus, Quine's picture of learning a language converges with the picture conveyed in the passage Wittgenstein quotes from Augustine in *PU* § 1. Here, the environment of the learner is described naturalistically from an objective perspective represented by the learner respectively by the one not who is not acquainted with the language. In Quine the idea is that the learner already masters a

language, that she has already her home language at hand. The problem of learning a foreign language comes down to the problem of access to the perspective of another.

Wittgenstein and Quine have both shown (see *PU* and the title essay of Quine (1969)) that there is a problem with ostension that can be formulated thus: to know which object or feature of an object a person indicates, we need to know what sort of object or feature is indicated.

> Die hinweisende Definition erklärt den Gebrauch – die Bedeutung – des Wortes, wenn es schon klar ist, welche Rolle das Wort in der Sprache überhaupt spielen soll. Wenn ich also weiss, dass Einer mir ein Farbwort erklären will, so wird mir die hinweisende Erklärung "Das heisst 'Sepia'" zum Verständnis des Wortes verhelfen. (*PU*, § 30.)

The point is that for an ostensive definition to be a sufficing explanation we need to be acquainted with the structural role a term plays in language. The idea purported here is semantic holism. A term is understood not all by itself. Its meaning is not a stand-alone object.

As Wittgenstein's reflections, Quine's arguments show that presupposing ontology and semantics to be ready-made yields semantic indeterminacy as well as referential inscrutability (Quine (1969), 30–45). Only, Quine draws the opposite consequences from this insight. In Putnam or Wittgenstein, the idea of ready-made semantics and ready-made objects, of objects individuated by their nature and not by our dealing with them – objects Putnam calls "self-identifying" (Putnam (1981), 53f.) –, presents us with a problem resembling the situation Socrates finds himself confronted with by Meno. Intellectually exhausted by Socrates' searching questions into the nature of the good or virtuous, Meno counters Socrates' push by raising a sceptical paradox:

> *Meno:* And how will you enquire, Socrates, into that which you do not know? What will you put forth as the subject of enquiry? And if you find what you want, how will you ever know that this is the thing which you did not know?
> *Socrates:* I know, Meno, what you mean; but just see what a tiresome dispute you are introducing. You argue that man cannot enquire either about that which he knows, or about that which he does not know; for if he knows, he has no need to enquire; and if not, he cannot; for he does not know the very subject about which he is to enquire.
> *Meno:* Well, Socrates, and is not the argument sound? (Plato (1994), 80d-81a)[32].

The claim is that if one is at a loss as concerns the determination of the notion one is looking for then the following questions suggest themselves: How can one go on searching for

[32] English translation according to Jowett (Plato (1949)).

what one does not know? How can one be sure to have found what one was looking out for?

Socrates does not believe the argument to be sound. He answers the challenge by appealing to the notorious Platonic myth of anamnesis. Surely, Meno is bedazzled by the myth. As a consequence, he is not able to take notice of Socrates relativizing the myth. Socrates obviously doesn't want to be caught by the spell of this myth, instead he insists that the function of the myth is to light up our Enlightenment wits, and to show us that we need to go on with our inquiry and our critical thinking, sophistic doubts notwithstanding.[33]

A similar figure of thought leading to paradox is developed in the *Theaitetos*. This latter paradox might be called the "pigeonry model of (having) knowledge" (Plato (1973), 196d-201c). The discussion of this paradox takes an early form of an inquiry into the philosophical grammar of "having knowledge". In fact, we find a whole family of such paradoxes throughout the history of philosophy. Quine's paradox of analysis (Quine (1960), 259) counts among them as the hermeneutic circle (e.g. Gadamer (1990), 270–80) or the rule-following paradox in Wittgenstein. – The root of these sorts of paradoxes in ontology, in semantics, in the philosophy of mind, or in rule-following is the same, and it will be identified in following chapters: these paradoxes only grow in the presence of absolute realms of objects.

Elaborating on Quine's dictum that radical translation begins at home (Quine (1969), 46) and developing his own view of "Radical Interpretation"[34], Davidson claims that the situation is in fact not that we have a language and its expressions while our aim is to find matching meanings in translation, but to find the correct interpretation of one language in another (Davidson (1984), 129). The point is that a theory of translation requires the subject language to be part of the theory, while a theory of interpretation does not. Davidson ends up with what he calls "triangulation" (Davidson (2001), 119), a pragmatic situation in which we find ourselves with some other person. Three similarity patterns can be found in this fundamental communicative situation. If the other person is a child learning words, the situation is this:

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[33] For Socrates (and Plato) as promoting a first Enlightenment see part II of Putnam (2004).

[34] The essay is collected in Davidson (1984), 129-139.

> The child finds tables similar; we find tables similar; and we find the child's responses in the presence of tables similar. … It is a form of triangulation: one line goes from the child in the direction of the table, one line goes from us in the direction of the table, and the third line goes between us and the child. (Davidson (2001), 119.)

Davidson relativizes the levels of grammar and logical syntax which were found to be essential earlier by putting priority to the communicative situation and reducing the levels on the pragmatic situation. Davidson leaves language left behind and moves on to an idiolectic view of communication concluding "that there is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed" (Davidson (1986b), 446).

While the latter remark might find Putnam's approval – even though for different reasons than it is put forward by Davidson –, the emphasis on triangulation is not his way to deal with language learning. According to Putnam, to understand language one needs to be conversant with the practices in which the language in question is used. In order to learn one's first language, the entering wedge are more primitive practices which are continually supported, enriched, developed, evolved, harmonized, and attuned in appliances of linguistic features and elements. One's first language grows with the growing complexity of the practices one is introduced to. According to Putnam interpretation is not needed in everyday cases, as soon as we are experienced enough in certain language use and the particular practices it draws on.

It is not the business of philosophy to provide a detailed theory of how humans learn. This is the task of various empirical sciences, primarily child developmental psychology and educational sciences. Still, the key to a philosophical understanding of the relevant issues – the issue of developing an understanding of pragmatically determined content, the issue of discontinuous semantic change, the practitioner's consciousness of these changes and her ability to understand them – lies indeed in understanding the change and development of practices, in understanding the conditions of subjective learning, objective failure and correction, in scrutinizing the notional framework which is adequate for their description. We might say it thus: Determining the limits of what is learnable is determining the limits of understanding. Hence, part of explaining how understanding draws on practice is to shed light on aspects of learning practices.

For an understanding of language we need to comprehend an irreducible pragmatic level including the pragmatic situation of language use. This pragmatic view is opposed to

a view of language which holds that the semantics of each and every sentence which may be uttered in any possible situation can be stated once and for all times at least in principle. In his writings, Putnam develops a continuous line of argument for such the pragmatic view and against a reductive semantic view. Putnam provides us with means to claim that philosophical theses are not coherently embedded within human practices and therefore are unintelligible and senseless.

If understanding linguistic expressions requires familiarity with the practice in which these expressions find their use, then language learning requires not only swotting vocabulary, but also, and more importantly, initiation into the related practices. Hence, the present view has considerable consequences for language learning. In the following, I present a sketch of the later Wittgenstein's critique of Augustine's account of language learning. There are remarkable parallels between Wittgenstein's critique and Quine's discussion of translation. However, Quine draws the wrong conclusions from these considerations (see Putnam (1994), 280).

2

The Normativity of Practices, or: Where Kripke Went Wrong

The main problem in learning practices is mastering normativity. In theoretical philosophy, normativity is commonly discussed in the context of rule following. For the later Wittgenstein it is clear that the problem of rule-following is solved by the insight that rule-following is a practice. The exact way, however, in which practice provides a solution to the problem raised by Wittgenstein has been subject to intense debate. In Wittgenstein, meaningful use of language and the understanding of such is only one form of rule-following which is put to question by the paradox. The general target is actions. Rule-following, according to Wittgenstein, is bound to practice. For some this makes it quite difficult to see how rule-following can remain objective notwithstanding. Furthermore, subjective aspects of following a rule are often taken to go by the board with Wittgenstein's private language arguments.

The idea that "practice" and "normativity" play a substantive role in an explanation of practices is challenged by Saul Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein and his sceptical solution of the paradox of rule-following – wrongly as I suggest in the present chapter. Kripke prominently holds that the normativity of rule-following is not genuine. According to his sceptical view, normativity roots in society. He denies that we are in fact able to learn to follow rules as individuals and defers rule-following practices on a social level. But not only is the subjective, individualist point of view given up for an intersubjective, social view on practices. An objective account is claimed to be impossible as well. Thus, Kripke's approach fails to provide us with an understanding of rule-following and normativity of practices. Eventually he deprives us of any understanding of understanding. My diagnosis of is that Kripke disguisedly follows Quine's naturalistic world-view too close on the heel. As an alternative I propose a naïve naturalism regarding normativity. The key

to a proper understanding of rule-following practices is to regard them as natural phenomena.[35]

Kripke's influential reading of Wittgenstein exemplarily displays difficulties of reconciling objectivity and rule-following as a practice (section 2.1). I claim that this reading is based on a specific naturalist stance and on a distinct notion of objectivity influenced by Quine (2.2). A naturalist view à la Quine undermines any attempt at reconciliation since such a view requires rule-following to be naturalized or reduced. The sort of reduction Quine has in mind leaves no room for a substantive notion of normativity right from the very start (2.3). I contrast such a Quinean approach with another naturalist stance mainly based on McDowell's work (2.4-2.5). In this view, rule-following practices and their normativity are taken as "natural" and normativity is to be reconstructed as an objective aspect of practices. Finally, this view of matters is brought in line with Wittgenstein on learning and on some general reflections on the general form of practices (2.6-2.7).

2.1 "Kripkenstein" – Kripke Reading Wittgenstein

Normativity is a central issue in practical as well as in theoretical philosophy. The rule-following problem raised in the later Wittgenstein represents a general formulation of all normative issues in the various disciplines of philosophy and concerns the normativity of meaning in the philosophy of language, accounts of conceptual content in the philosophy of mind, or the normative authority of moral requirements in practical philosophy. The problem of rule-following concerns the relation between a rule and the (course of) action that is in accord with it (see *PU*, §§ 198–202) in two ways: firstly, how can rules determine what is in accord with them? Secondly, how can finite sets of particular instances of rule-following refer to the guiding rule behind them? These two problems of the relation between a rule and the instances of its application are the problem of normativity of rules.

On the face of it, two stances suggest ready-made answers to these questions: Platonism and interpretationism. To put it briefly, the Platonist answer assures us that rules are intrinsically normative and that a rule therefore *intrinsically* determines what is in accord with it. In the same way, a Platonist answer would hold that any instance intrinsically re-

[35] For these issues see also Doğuoğlu (2004).

fers to the rule it exemplifies. The second way of dealing with the problem is to hold that the accordance between rule and action is determined by interpretation. Any set of finite instances, the idea is, stands in need of interpretation as exemplifying a particular rule, while this rule itself stands in need of interpretation to guide any further course of action.

Wittgenstein argues to the conclusion that paradoxically both answers fail. A rule by itself does not determine intrinsically or self-sufficiently what accords with it, but neither does it suffice to interpret the rule since any such interpretation gives just another rule at hand for which further interpretation is required, a fact that thus leads to an infinite regress.

According to Wittgenstein, the solution to the paradox is to be found in the fact that following a rule is a practice: a rule determines which actions accord with it not all by itself but rather *within a practice* and usually no interpretation is needed within such a practice. In the same way, the rule followed is not determined by its instances all by themselves, but rather as instances, or actions, which stand within a practice. This is Wittgenstein's solution of the normativity of rule-following.

This much being uncontroversial, this solution entails a subsequent problem, or so at least it seems. If practices secure the normativity of rules, the question remains whether this normative relation between a rule and its instantiation is objective. Wittgenstein claims that his idea indeed provides objectivity in a minimal sense, at least, as a difference between seeming right and being right, or between "thinking one was obeying a rule" and "obeying it" (*PU*, § 202). This problem of whether or not we can make sense of the objectivity and the subjectivity of practices is controversial.

In order to get clear about these matters, the notion of practice, its role in the solution to the paradox, and the notions of objectivity and of subjectivity need to be cashed out.

In his influential reading of Wittgenstein on rules and private language, Kripke pursues a sceptical line concerning the objectivity and the subjectivity of rule-following. According to Kripke, Wittgenstein develops a sceptical paradox concerning meaning and rule-following, and thus, since the paradox is unavoidable, proposes a sceptical solution.

Kripke indeed reads the rule-following considerations without further argument as concerning meanings or semantics, a restriction that is not found in Wittgenstein. On the contrary, *PU* solely *starts out* with a discussion of semantic issues, i.e. with the relation between words and their meaning, but semantics is tied to pragmatics already by § 43. In what follows, Wittgenstein is not concerned with semantics in particular but with how to

make "philosophical grammar" explicit to the point that we arrive at a better understanding of practices. But this "making explicit" is not Brandom's project since it does not succumb to the illusion that "philosophical grammar" could ever be clarified once and for all. On the contrary, one of Wittgenstein's main aims is, in Travis' terminology, to make plausible that pragmatics is genuinely irreducible and might not be "domesticated" (Travis (1997), 91–4). Yet, in the following discussion of Kripke, I shall not address this difference to the textual evidence in Wittgenstein any further and assume that Kripke's account of the paradox and the projected solution can easily be expanded to include these wider issues.

Kripke's restricted semantic interpretation of the paradox is the following. The basic problem is to find facts about an individual which determine the relation between what she means to say and her actual use of words, that is, facts determining the relation between a rule (meaning) and the actions in accord with it (meaningful uses). In a Platonist framework, things would be simple: meanings determine the course of action or the use of linguistic expressions. Wittgenstein, according to Kripke, argues forcefully against such Platonist conceptions and puts forward a conception of meaning as use, within which meaning boils down to a finite set of uses in the past. Put this way we encounter a problem of determining the relation between past uses and according future applications of words. The point is that – since the relation between the individual's meaning (or of her intention) and her future actions is *normative and* not *descriptive* – we are in need of some kind of *normative machinery* or some nomological explanation that would determine future cases of application. Kripke takes Wittgenstein to show that such machinery does not exist. What is more, *no fact at all* will serve for determination, since there are no *normative* facts. There are no such facts about an individual projecting or determining future cases of application out of past applications.

However, if there are no objective facts about an individual, what about subjective facts, that is, some private experience of meaning (or intending) something? Such an exit is ruled out by reference to Wittgenstein's claim that there must be a difference between thinking one was obeying a rule and obeying it; a claim that is argued for, as Kripke states it, in various passages of *PU*, §§ 138–202. It is for this reason that Kripke claims that "Wittgenstein rejects 'private language' as early as § 202" (Kripke (1982), 79) and that it "… is his solution … that contains the argument against 'private language'; for allegedly, the solution will not admit such a language" (Kripke (1982), 60). Hence, in this interpreta-

tion, the sceptical paradox consists in language use being neither objectively nor subjectively founded.

Kripke's sceptical point concerning the objectivity of rule-following may then be put thus: the relation between facts about me and what I mean or how I act is not nomologically explicable, neither by strict universal nor by probabilistic laws; there is no room for normativity in lawful necessitation. This claim is already radical, since it amounts to saying that there are no facts as to an individual meaning something by using a linguistic expression, and no facts as to her intending something determinate. All the same, Kripke goes even further by denying there being any subjective foundation either and by claiming that, as a matter of fact, *the individual does, on her own, not mean or intend anything* by her words; "the notion of a rule as guiding the person who adopts it can have *no* substantive content" (Kripke (1982), 89)[36]. This is the sceptical paradox in Kripke's recording.

Kripke (1982) presents a reading of both Wittgenstein's considerations of rule-following and his discussion of the possibility of private language. The results of the discussions in Wittgenstein are, firstly, that the paradox of rule-following is resolved by the fact that rule-following is a practice, and, secondly, that a private language is not possible. Kripke connects these discussions by playing "private" off against "practice". He takes it that to follow a rule is a practice just because it is not possible to follow a rule privately and vice versa. This has it that the issue about private language is just a special case of rule-following, because language is just one kind of practices, namely linguistic practices. According to Kripke, a private language is not possible because use of language is guided by rules. As guided by rules, language use is a practice. In agreement with this view of matters, Kripke's reconstruction of the rule following considerations in Wittgenstein concentrates on privacy. Thus he argues that "no fact *about me*" (Kripke (1982), 21) provides a solution to the paradox of rule-following, and he asks: "What can there be *in my mind* that I make use of when I act in the future?" (Kripke (1982), 22.) Among the possible candidates for relevant "facts about me" Kripke discusses are occurrent or dispositional mental states (pp. 21–32), irreducible qualitative introspectible experiences (pp. 40–45), mental images (pp. 42f.), a mental grasp of Fregean abstract objects or Platonic ideas (pp. 52–4). All these private, mental candidates, however, are rejected. They fail to explain the norma-

[36] Without further notice, all emphases within quotes are in the original.

tive and justificatory aspects of rule-following. The fact that I am in a certain qualitative mental state or that I do have a certain disposition to behaviour does not give me any reasonable basis to decide how to follow a rule correctly. Any of these candidates enters only as a fact, not as a reason or justification into an explanation of my acting according to a rule (Kripke (1982), 37). A description of these facts does not provide any basis for normative conclusions.

The "facts about me" Kripke discusses seem to fall into two classes according to the access we have to these facts or the sort of epistemic status they have. Either they are verifiable, objective facts, which would be the result of scientific investigation, as dispositions to behaviour by observation, behavioural testing, scanning of brain states and the like. Scientific analysis of behaviour is Quine's starting point in his inquiries to determine meaning and reference (see again Quine (1960) or Quine (1969); see also the discussion in Kripke (1982), pp. 55–7). The second class of those "facts about me" Kripke is checking out contains subjective facts found by psychological investigation of the subjects, e.g. by introspection or questionnaires. Such subjective facts, however, cannot be verified independently of the subject they are facts about. Notions like correctness or objectivity fit fine with the first sort of facts, while subjective facts are, so to say, up to the authority of their "owner".

In Wittgenstein's name, Kripke puts forward a sceptical solution approaching objectivity as close as possible. Since there is nothing, that is to say, no fact about an individual determining the normative relation between a rule and the according course of action, each new application of the individual "… is a leap in the dark; any present intention could be interpreted so as to accord with anything we may choose to do" (Kripke (1982), 55). Consequently, Kripke holds Wittgenstein to take recourse to practice as something else than the desired factual and objective underwriting which would at least establish some relation between rule and action. Since there are, according to Kripke, no objective facts that determine what I mean by the use of certain words or how I should go on in the future (the sceptical problem), the social practice of language use determines what I mean and how I should go on[37] (the proposed sceptical solution accepting the sceptical problem). Thus, neither objective, scientifically established facts nor subjective, introspectively experienced

[37] Bloor (1983), Bloor (1997), Kusch (2002), Williams (1999), and Pettit (2002) share Kripke's communalist view of matters in Wittgenstein at least in general.

facts provide a basis for the normativity of rule following. What is more, Kripke believes that there are no facts at all, which would provide such a basis. Hence, he presents the paradox stated in §201 in Wittgenstein's *Investigations* as a sceptical paradox which "may be regarded as a new form of philosophical scepticism" (Kripke (1982), 7). As a *sceptical* paradox it must remain unanswered (e.g. Kripke (1982), 55). There can be no straightforward solution to the paradox, but only a "sceptical solution" (e.g. Kripke (1982), 108).

As was pointed out in the first chapter, understanding of language use remains not only on a grammatical or semantic level but necessarily includes a pragmatic level. While Wittgenstein states the paradox of following rules as a problem of the relation between rules and actions – and this pragmatic level would indeed be the natural level to go on after our first chapter –, Kripke in his reading of Wittgenstein in large parts remains on a linguistic level and claims that the paradox of rule-following in fact concerns language. It applies to all meaningful language (Kripke (1982), 7). This claim is not wrong. However, it should be clear from our discussion in chapter 1, that this is not the whole story. To use and understand language requires more than simply being able to manipulate linguistic signs and being able to grasp how others manipulate those signs. Linguistic faculty requires as well acquaintance with the pragmatic level of a certain language, with the relevant "pragmata" it addresses. I will return to these relevant aspects of practices in the next chapter. The paradox does not only bear on meaningful language but certainly on meaningful action in general.

While Kripke does not address individual understanding in the first place, understanding certainly is in play as concerns individuals following rules. Understanding incorporates two seemingly irreconcilable aspects. On the one hand, understanding, making sense, needs to be within the range of powers of a concrete or abstract subject (persons, institutions, states, etc.), since such subjects those who are able to understand. On the other hand, to be shared with others and to be capable of being correct or incorrect, it requires being objective.

The paradox of rule-following is related to a subjective and an objective condition. The condition of subjectivity calls for personal authority in mastering the rules. Objectivity on the other hand requires personal authority in mastering rules to be fallible. Hence, this is the condition of objectivity: whether a rule is followed correctly in an application of it, is not up to the subject only, but dependent on objective terms as well.

In the following, the issue of normativity is pursued by an analysis of Kripke's influential sceptical approach (Kripke (1982)). An analysis of the presuppositions of his account leads to a notional clarification and an explanation of how practices can be conceived as both objective and subjective without falling for the seductive sirens of metaphysical realism on the one hand, and being caught in the traps of private languages on the other hand. The present study will hold that objectivity and subjectivity are interrelated notions allowing normative practices to be fallible as well as consciously performed.[38]

2.2 Kripke's Naturalist Approach to the Factuality of Semantics

The starting point of my critique of this solution of Kripke's is that it implicitly presupposes a notional field consisting of three absolutely distinct and opposed realms, namely (1) a realm of interrelated notions like "objective", "fact", "real", and "natural", (2) a realm of notions like "intersubjective", "communal", "social", and probably "cultural", and (3) a realm of notions like "subjective", "individual", and "private". Note that most of the terms I use to describe the notional fields are mine, not Kripke's. I use these notions in my interpretation to bring out the implications of Kripke's solution more clearly.

The three realms are distinct insofar as they exclude each other, as they are strictly separated and do not overlap. What is objective can be neither social nor individual. What

[38] While Kripke admits that his reading might be controversial and that what he develops is meant neither as a reading of Wittgenstein nor as an argument by Kripke, but rather "Wittgenstein's argument as it struck Kripke" (Kripke (1982), 5). Since in philosophy most interpretations contain this element of "being struck by", the upshot of what Kripke says seems to be that he does not want to get involved into hermeneutical discussions concerning what Wittgenstein really meant and what not. The points Kripke makes are neither historical nor exegetical. What interests him is the systematic philosophical import of his claims and the consequences they yield – whether or not he himself accepts these claims. Taking this seriously I will not focus on the question where I take Kripke's reading inadequate concerning the textual evidence, even though at various places I think Kripke is fundamentally misguided in his understanding of Wittgenstein. These inadequacies to the textual evidence are pointed out by a host of other authors, for example in chapter 11 of McDowell (1998b), Baker and Hacker (1984), Ebbs (1997), Williams (1999), or in Summerfield (1990)). Taking a look at the disagreeing readings these authors propose, however, suggests that the textual evidence in the later Wittgenstein is underdetermined. But this is not unusual with great philosophy.

is intersubjective can be neither strictly real nor private. What is subjective can be neither factual nor social. The realms are further complementary in the following sense: what is neither objective nor subjective must be intersubjective.

The question Kripke claims Wittgenstein to address is where to put cases of rule-following, or normative practice. Practices cannot be individual practices for reasons pointed out in his interpretation of the private language argument. Since practices are in any case *human* practices, strict objectivity seems unattainable. Thus, if we presuppose the notional structure above, practices can neither be located in the realm (1) of objectivity, nor in the realm (3) of subjectivity. An answer can exclusively be sought within the notional realm (2). All notions connected to the solution of the paradox have to be located in (2). To apply the predicate "private" to languages is from this point of view simply violating logical syntax, since "private" does not comply with "language" on a semantic level. In view of these notional restrictions, it is not surprising that Kripke claims practice to be social and normativity to be founded in community. Further, he holds that neither can language be private, nor can facts be normative. Robinson is a rule-follower only if he is taken into a community of practitioners.

Practice is not exactly the solution Kripke's Wittgenstein initially was watching out for. It serves merely as a second-rate or *sceptical solution*. As belonging to the notional realm of intersubjectivity, it the relation between a rule and its application cannot count as objectively determined. The relation could be called "objective" only if there would be an objective fact providing a reasonable basis.

Yet at the same time, the practice of a community precludes any appeal to privacy or subjectivity. As a matter of consequence, rule-following practices are considered as social practices in Kripke. Hence, notional realms (1) and (3) are irrelevant. Wittgenstein's difference between seeming right and being right reduces in this view to a difference between seeming right to an individual and being right according to the community the individual is integrated into. This sort of intersubjectivity is Kripke's version of 'objectivity of rule-following *within* a practice'. Rule-following cannot attain objectivity for it cannot be neatly separated from the perspective of a community.

To sum up Kripke's view boils down to the claim that if practices are taken to be practices performed by subjects, then objectivity must fail, because in this case, rule-following is viewed from a subjective perspective. However, he holds, such a perspective cannot be

accounted for in objective terms or from an objective perspective. This is what he assumes to be shown by the private language argument. Practices being *human* practices, but not subjective, the only way out is to claim that it is *social* practices which secure or explain the normativity of rule-following. This is the solution and it is a sceptical solution since social practices strictly fail to be accounted for in objective terms also. To his eyes, even though failing to account for objectivity and for a subjective perspective; intersubjectivity is the best we can do. According to Kripke, therefore, any substantive conception of objectivity as well as of subjective authority in the explanation of the normativity of rule-following are ruled out by the paradox and its solution in favour of a social conception of normative practices.

Kripke compares Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations with Goodman's new riddle of induction and with Quine's arguments against the factuality of semantics or the objectivity of meaning and reference.[39] While, indeed, Goodman's results are comparable to Wittgenstein's in their spirit and purpose,[40] Quine's way of dealing with philosophical problems and results is fundamentally different. Kripke further reads Wittgenstein as presenting a sceptical solution in a tone analogous to Hume's sceptical inquiries (Kripke (1982), 62–8, esp. 63).

Whenever Wittgenstein in his considerations comes across puzzling results, he turns back to the presuppositions that led to the puzzlement and reviews the base he started out from. Quine on the other hand insists on the puzzles he develops and claims that, as a matter of fact, we face ontological relativity as well as semantic indeterminacy. This difference in strategy is usually illustrated by the slogan that one philosopher's *modus ponens* is another philosopher's *modus tollens*.[41] It is, among other things, his *modus ponens* attitude that leads Kripke to misread Wittgenstein in a Quinean spirit and develop a sceptical interpretation.

Kripke is well aware of the weighty differences between Wittgenstein's problem of rule-following and Quine's discussion of the indeterminacy of meaning, similarities not-

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[39] See Goodman (1983), and Kripke (1982), 20 and 58; further see, e.g., Quine (1960), the title essay of Quine (1969), and Kripke (1982), 55-58, 114f.

[40] It is surprising that there exists no single study devoted at length to both Wittgenstein on rule-following and Goodman on projection.

[41] See, for example, Putnam (1994), 280.

withstanding. According to Kripke, the main difference between Quine and Wittgenstein is this: Wittgenstein does not limit himself to the kind of behaviourism Quine favours, since he does not only consider behavioural facts as candidates for a possible solution of the paradox but also a variety of dispositions, qualia, images, mental states or entities (Kripke (1982), 22–54). In the eyes of Kripke, this fact renders Wittgenstein's scepticism even more forceful than Quine's (Kripke (1982), 14). But despite this, going beyond Quine and considering mental facts (or states or objects) as aspirants to a solution, all the candidates Kripke deems worthy presuppose a naturalist notion of fact (or state or object). In taking Wittgenstein to promote a sceptical paradox, Kripke is convinced right from the beginning that whichever behavioural or mental facts about me we are consulting, as facts they cannot determine what I am to do in order to act according to a certain rule. Therefore, none of the facts Kripke examines and ponders would do as a *normative* fact.

2.3 Eliminative Naturalism in Semantics: The Dissolution of Normativity in Quine

The restrictions on the use of "objectivity, "intersubjectivity", "subjectivity" and their cognates in Kripke can be traced back to a naturalism he shares with Quine.[42] In the following, I will determine the roots of Kripke's sceptical – or indeed eliminative – account of normativity. I will further claim that Quinean naturalism encounters serious problems as concerns the questions of how scientific progress or scientific learning is possible. What is more, this form of naturalism encounters problems of explaining how subjective learning is possible.

The fundamental claim of Quine's naturalism is – in his own wording – the following: "Naturalism looks only to natural science, however fallible, for an account of what there is and what what there is does" (Quine (1992), 9). Sellars, for his part, puts this commitment

[42] I am aware that Quine's scientistic naturalism cannot count for mainstream scientistic naturalism. Note further that "naturalism" is said in many ways (see footnote 49). Finally, I would like to emphasize that the present account is in no way intended to be anti-scientific. I don't mean to argue against any particular science or scientific methods, I only argue decidedly against philosophers who take science or scientific methods uncritically as a philosophical outlook and who take science to deliver a basis for philosophical or metaphysical theses *which does not stand in need of critical reflection*.

into a neat Protagorean formula that would surely meet Quine's approval: "… in the dimension of describing and explaining the world, science is the measure of all things, of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not" (Sellars (1997), 83).[43] Since philosophical questions in general are to be pursued and answered in such a scientific spirit, epistemology, as the project of explaining how we as "physical denizens of the physical world" (Quine (1995), 16) manage to develop fruitful scientific theories out of mere stimuli at our nerve endings, is turned into a chapter of empirical psychology (Quine (1969), 83) or cognitive science.

In his last book *From Stimulus to Science*, Quine claims that the traditional epistemological quest for knowledge about knowledge had already lost its sense by the times of Aristotle: "Knowledge itself … outpaced knowledge about knowledge" (Quine (1995), 2). The tremendous progress of knowledge acquisition and its successful application have ruled out epistemological doubts concerning the reliability of these knowledge claims. Scientific realist he is, Quine simply takes the ever-evolving stock of *scientific* (and only scientific) knowledge, as well as the ways we attain it for granted.

Still, one might detect a certain tension in Quine's writings. While access to the structure of nature is secured by scientific means and methods, nature itself remains ultimately undisclosed. In rejecting the two dogmas of empiricism (Quine (1980), 20–46) and adopting a holistic web of belief, Quine commits himself to a negative concept of nature as an independent effective cause, which cannot become part of the web itself but merely impinges on it from the outside, staying, so to say, *incognito*, or, to use Quine's term, *inscrutable*. Science therefore does not achieve objectivity in a strict sense, but merely intersubjectivity (Quine (1995), 44). Eventually, Quine claims that all we can grasp of nature is just its structural traits, a claim he puts into a neat slogan, that in turn might find Protagoras' approval: "Save the structure and you save all" (Quine (1992), 8). Hence, Quine is committed to a concept of nature, which remains a conceptually unattainable "Ding an sich", a "noumenon" in the negative understanding, as Kant would say.[44] This is

[43] See, e.g., Plato (1973), 152a, for a record of the Protagorean formula, and the subsequent pages for a lengthy critical discussion of it by Socrates.

[44] Kant (1990), B307-11.

the very reason why Hilary Putnam raises his charge against Quine – argued for in several of his writings[45] – claiming that he is committed to metaphysical realism.

The tension I mentioned above results from a combination of this notion of nature remaining undisclosed with Quine's declared scientific realism. It is resolved by a closer look at Quine's notion of "scientific objectivity", which amounts to intersubjectivity only:

> Science ventures its tentative answers in man-made concepts, perforce, couched in man-made language, but we can ask no better. The very notion of objects, or of one and many, is indeed as parochially human as the parts of speech; to ask what reality is *really* like, however, apart from human categories, is self-stultifying. … (Quine (1992), 9; see also 45f.)

It seems, then, that the appropriate characterization of nature in Quine's global structuralism (Quine (1992)) would, in allusion to Wittgenstein's thought experiment of the beetle in a box (*PU*, § 293), be the following: Quine's nature is a nature concealed in a box nobody has access to; thus it just cancels out. On the other hand, since in Quine's naturalism all that belongs into the subjective realm (3) is reduced to overt behaviour subjectivity cancels out as well. A naturalist form of metaphysical realism eventually meets relativism in scepticism. If this rough sketch of Quine's naturalism is correct, normativity is not explained substantively in this view. What is more, the concept of science Quine favours faces the same problem. If one accepts this sort of naturalism, the only place to locate human practices, including scientific practices, is the realm of intersubjectivity (2).

In his discussion of various failing strategies for naturalizing rule-following and in arguing to the conclusion that objectivity cannot be attained if rule-following is a practice, Kripke draws on a notional landscape or semantic field, I claimed, that separates into three distinct notional fields, the realm of the objective, or natural, the realm of the subjective, or private, and a realm in between, the realm of intersubjectivity. This notional trichotomy is due to forms of naturalism of a broadly scientistic brand à la Quine in which objectivity is taken in a metaphysical way as absolute and separate from human practices, let alone individual subjects. In effect, it is just such a Quinean naturalist conception of objectivity and factuality, which is implicit in Kripke's discussion of possible facts, determining the relation between past and future actions. Owing to its scientistic spirit, Quine's naturalism naturalizes normativity rather than providing a naturalist view on it.

Still, there are alternatives to this type of naturalist account, with both naturalist and non-naturalist backgrounds.

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[45] See, e.g., Putnam (1981), chap. 1-3, Putnam (1994), or Putnam (1999), Part I.

The typical non-naturalist strategy is to claim that there is a fundamental cleavage between *scientific explanation of nature* and *understanding of human society, culture, and mind*. The reaction in this case is to concede that normativity cannot be explained in the sketched picture of scientistic naturalism since normativity is the subject not of natural sciences which aim at explaining their phenomena, but of other sciences aiming at an understanding of the phenomenon. While natural sciences yield universal *explanations* and generality on an abstract level, while the humanities or historical and social sciences yield particular or singular *understanding* of specific, unique, or concrete phenomena. A non-naturalist strategy of this sort typically claims there to be a fundamental cleavage between "Erklären" and "Verstehen", a distinction that goes back to Droysen and is first developed to distinguish clearly natural sciences and humanities by Dilthey (see Apel (1979), 15–21). Indeed, Dilthey's distinction is a response to Mill's naturalist inclusion of humanities, or, in Mill's terminology, "moral sciences" among causally explaining sciences (see Apel (1979), 17). Understanding (or "Verstehen") and explaining ("Erklären") are taken to be two fundamentally different modes of knowledge resulting from fundamentally different ways or methods of gaining knowledge. Hence, the dichotomy of "Erklären" and "Verstehen" stands for two irreconcilable, completely separated projects, science on the one hand, humanities and social sciences on the other hand ("Naturwissenschaften" vs. "Geistes-" and "Sozialwissenschaften"). Such a view is at odds with naturalism concerning the latter's claim that there is no knowledge except scientific knowledge of nature. It reclaims the field of human culture and mind and holds that scientific explanations in this area are doomed to fail because science misses the essential point of individuality or subjectivity from the very beginning.

It is striking that McDowell, in his reading of Gadamer (see McDowell (1996), esp. lect. 6), does neither mention nor reflect upon this opposition of "Verstehen" and "Erklären" or the ensuing opposition of "Natur-" and "Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften", even though Gadamer supports such an opposition, at least in the form of an opposition of truth and method. For this reason, Gadamer's reflection on the notion of "Verstehen" is restricted mainly to its use in humanities and social sciences. Still, he claims "Verstehen" to have stand-alone validity, which cannot be reduced to method, also in natural science (Gadamer (1990), 1).

To argue on this line, accepting a strict difference between explaining and understanding sciences, however, is not really to challenge the Quinean naturalist, but in actual fact to

accept her notional framework. Normativity would be located outside science. Hence, the naturalist would accept the dichotomy with a smile. If answers to, say, semantic facts or moral questions do not count independently from any subjective point of view but are merely relative to a particular culture and its subjects, then no wonder they seem not very coercive to her. All the same, the naturalist will not be able to resist the enticing further step of eliminating the individual and the subject. The naturalist and the non-naturalist are at odds primarily on what to count as knowledge in an understanding access to human mind and culture. And in fact, Quine leaves room for a division of labour between explaining and understanding sciences (Quine (1995), chap. 8). Understanding the particular is the business of "softer sciences" which typically deal with normative issues (Quine (1995), 49f). It is not possible to catch the subjectivity inherent in verbs expressing propositional attitudes within the extensional framework within which Quine's preferred naturalism remains (Quine (1995), 98f.):

> The verbs of propositional attitude mostly remain mentalistic: not presumed translatable into physiological terms, tough each individual mental event purports to be physiologically specifiable. Such is the extensionalist accommodation of the erstwhile intensional idioms of propositional attitudes. (Quine (1995), 98.)

While semantics according to Quine should be explained in extensional terms, the intensional idiom can be included "by courtesy of anomalous monism" (Quine (1995), 98). Hence hard-boiled naturalism à la Quine and the sketched non-naturalist alternative in fact complement each other. While Quine's naturalism is monistic, the latter sort of distinctive non-naturalist outlook is dualistic in developing two fundamentally separate fields of investigation. The drawback of both accounts is that their monism or dualism is proclaimed dogmatically and without restriction. Further, these dogmatic claims are taken to be a priori and irrefutable.

There are many reasons to dismiss Kripke's sceptical naturalization of Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations and his sceptical solution which accepts the sketched notional landscape. In effect, Kripke's so-called sceptical solution amounts to just this: an eliminative account of (the objectivity and normativity of) rule-following, thereby evoking sceptical and relativistic worries concerning a fundamental part of our lives. In effect, Kripke's account does not amount to a *naturalist view* of rule-following, but to a *naturalization* of

rule-following. The objectivity and normativity of such practices is "quined"[46]. The proposed sceptical solution within notional realm (2) thereby functions as some kind of quietening placebo. This might lead us to reject the presupposed Quinean scientistic naturalism with the intention of saving the objectivity of rule-following. Indeed, I take Kripke's sceptical reading of the later Wittgenstein on rules as self-defeating since it fails to provide for the objectivity of rule-following practices.[47] Cancelling out the objectivity and even the subjectivity of rule-following practices overturns any position that leads to this conclusion.[48]

As noted above, Quine's medication against the "melancholy" of the sceptic concerning scientific knowledge is to invoke the fact that "knowledge itself … outpaced knowledge about knowledge". In the same vein and with the same right one could suggest to extend the line and acknowledge the fact that our knowledge concerning rule-following practices easily outpaces sceptical worries regarding it. Fundamental scepticism concerning rule-following is like fundamental epistemological scepticism some sort of melancholy or scientistic infatuation to be overcome (Quine (1995), 1).

2.4 Two Sorts of Naturalism

Naturalism suggests itself as an attractive position for various reasons. A characterization of naturalisms may take a negative and a positive form:[49] negatively described it aims at avoiding various problematic "–isms", turning against epistemological scepticism, transcendentalism or apriorism and various forms of Platonism, dualism or supernaturalism (McDowell (1996), 77f)[50]; what is more, it sets itself against various forms of relativism,

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[46] The verb "to quine" is due to Daniel Dennett. In the first paragraph of "Quining Qualia" he cites the entry from his *The Philosophical Lexicon*: "quine, v. To deny resolutely the existence or importance of something real or significant.", see Dennett (1978).

[47] For an argument along these lines see Boghossian (2002), 185.

[48] Hilary Putnam argues in just this vein against any position that leads to ontological relativity (see, e.g., ch. 14 in Putnam (1994), 280).

[49] For informative overviews and discussion as well as further references see, e.g., Kitcher (1992), Rea (2002), Rosenberg (1996), or Shook (2003).

[50] McDowell characterizes his own sort of naturalism as "naturalized Platonism" (McDowell (1996), 91-95).

culturalism or subjectivism. Positively described, the core idea of naturalism is to take nature to be the only and ultimate ground for objectivity in which recourse to that same nature amounts to appealing to an independent authority that decides between correct or incorrect. Furthermore, nature or its structure is claimed to be accessible by certain means and methods of inquiry. A third distinctive feature of naturalism is that the results of such inquiry as well as its methods are in principle subject to error and that they might need to be revised in view of recalcitrant record.

In sum, what seems to be distinctive for naturalist positions of all sorts is – in positive and negative terms – that they (a) put forward *one* continuous system of nature or reality or objectivity (in contrast to dualistic or pluralistic views of various provenances), (b) uphold a pragmatic realism concerning epistemological access to this system of nature by certain means and methods (against sceptical doubts), and (c) maintain that all knowledge claims as well as the ways of attaining knowledge are principally fallible or answerable to nature or reality (against apriorism). Everything may be subject to reconsideration; "no statement is immune to revision" (Quine (1980), 43). Hence, naturalisms usually combine three theses concerning a conception of nature, of its accessibility through scientific methods, and the fallibility of both the results and of these methods of access.

In view of these attractive forces of naturalism, confronted with Quinean naturalism another strategy is of vantage. As has already been noted, talk of "naturalism" regarding rule-following or normative practices wavers ambiguously between naturalism and naturalization. Naturalization of normativity is pursued by Quine and Kripke and amounts to reductionism. Restricting (a) to (c) above to natural science, as Quine does, leaves no room for a substantial notion of normativity, neither in semantics nor in ethics. Quinean naturalism seeks an explanatory reduction of normative phenomena to natural facts, laws, and processes. However, it is argued in view of the examples of both Quine and Kripke that such projects of naturalization of normativity are doomed to fail in principle.

We might, though, develop an alternative, properly called *naturalism regarding rule-following practices*, by rejecting Quine's limitation of (a) to (c) to science and its methods, and by holding a position that takes (at least certain paradigmatic forms of) rule-following practices to be objective natural phenomena. This position holds that there is only one type

of objectivity which is tied to nature. There may be different sorts of objectivity.[51] There are no aprioristic differences in type – *pace* Gadamer's view of understanding sciences, in which there is a fundamental difference between objectively understanding the subjective and objectivity in scientific explanation. In this alternative view pursued here, the notion of objectivity is not squeezed to fit Kripke's notional trichotomy mooted above. On the contrary, Kripke's trichotomy collapses because practices are not separated from objectivity but are themselves taken to be paradigmatically objective from the very beginning. This, then, makes room for a different notional landscape.

At this point, we might now ask ourselves in more detail what sort of naturalism would do for substantial objectivity in rule-following practices and how the notional landscape has to be drawn in this case. Let me therefore contrast these considerations of *naturalizing rule-following practices* with a *naturalism* concerning these practices.

2.5 Naïve Naturalism Regarding Normativity

Putnam has long been urging that Quine's naturalist background bars any substantial notion of semantics from the very beginning. A latent metaphysical realism leads Quine to scepticism and relativism (see, e.g. ch. 14 in Putnam (1994), 280). His strategy is to take semantics as factual and claiming that there must be other facts than facts of physics, and other objective truths than truths of physics. He claims that the idea that all facts there are, and all objective truths there are must be facts and truths of physical nature is not only unfounded but neglects the facts and truths we encounter in our daily life.[52]

I take up this line of argument. Consequently, the strategy to secure the objectivity (of normativity) of rule-following pursued here is to reject the scientistic naturalist's notional corset and her scientism. (Note that the present view does not oppose science in any way or purport to be anti-scientific. It just opposes the metaphysical thesis that is exhibited in the idea that all objective truths are scientific truths, or even truths of physics (see Putnam

[51] Reflections on objectivity and especially the objectivity of ethical claims are an ongoing concern in Putnam; however I will not particularly address these discussions. For recent accounts see e.g. Putnam (2002a), I.2; Putnam (2002b); Putnam (2004), esp. chap. 2&3; for earlier writings see Putnam (1990), esp. chap. 8 & 11. See also Rosen (1994) for various uses of "objectivity" and "objective".

[52] (Putnam (2002a), 106; see also Putnam (1992), esp. chap. 4&5)

(2002a), 106); as concerns an alleged anti-scientific attitude of this account see Putnam (1999), 20, and lect. 2–3.)

The strategy is to question the restriction of objective, that is natural, knowledge to scientific knowledge as well as her restriction of possible access to nature to scientific means and methods. Still, this strategy keeps side with the attractive features of naturalism, namely fallibilism and the various anti-metaphysical and anti-sceptical stances. According to the very short do-it-yourselfer's guide to naturalism developed above, we have to specify (a) the realm of the natural and objective by determining the ontology presupposed by what we regard as (b) the paradigmatic knowledge claims and the paradigmatic means and methods of inquiry we want to admit, and (c) the ways in which these claims and methods might become subject to revision.

In taking for granted that rule-following, or normative practices, can succeed or fail from an objective point of view, we leave Kripke behind. As suggested above, this requires the rejection of Kripke's notional trichotomy. It leads us to a different view on Wittgenstein's paradox. The lines of argument I follow here are pursued and developed by authors like Hilary Putnam, John McDowell, or John Haugeland.[53] None of these philosophers denies the social character of language and of complex rule-following practices. They claim, however, that these practices do *neither solely nor primarily* depend on us being members of a society but as well on us living with physical bodies in a certain physical environment and on us being capable to master and apply techniques in such environments.

As regards language use, this is exactly the initial idea of semantic externalism. In "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", Putnam develops semantic externalism as a position, which ensures the objectivity of the meaning of our words. The point is to explain semantic as well as theory change while keeping realism. To reconcile realism with semantic change, Putnam conceives of the objects of reference as external to individual understanding of linguistic expressions.

This idea of semantic externalism is integrated in the present account. Language is part of practices and understanding. Mastering language is a subjective ability which draws on the practice of which it is a part. Hence, if the practice in question includes a physical envi-

[53] See, e.g., Putnam (2004); McDowell (1998a), esp. chap. 13 and 14-16; McDowell (1998b), esp. chap. 11-14, Haugeland (1998), esp. essays 1, 9, 10, 13.

ronment and physical objects, understanding draws on these objects, too. Or else the notion of mastering the language does not apply to the individual.

Presupposing this realist idea of semantic externalism, the community cannot be (all of) rock bottom turning the spade;[54] objectivity collapses if it is merely reduced to a Kripkean substitute like "being accepted by a community (or by most members of it)". Note that Wittgenstein does not so much give some kind of dogmatic answer with the metaphor of the turning spade, but rather rejects sceptical and unsatisfying questions, which lead to "rock bottom." This becomes obvious in *PU*, § 217, when Wittgenstein speaks of "architectonic demands", saying that sometimes the demanded explanation is comparable to a "Scheingesims" (ornamental coping) which fulfils no static function. In this reading, the upshot of Wittgenstein's development of a paradox is not sceptical as regards rule-following as a practice, but rather concerning the notional trichotomy making it impossible to see how there can be an objective difference between seeming right and being right.

The other aspect I miss in Kripke's account is the aspect of the individual, the subject. In § 217, Wittgenstein says: "This is simply how I act".[55] He does not speak of a community, but of an individual actor - he does not say 'This is simply how *we* act'. In Kripke's account, the individual does not play any substantial role, not even after having been accepted as a member of the community; she frisks about blindly in the dark as long as there is no community: "All we can say, if we consider a single person in isolation, is that our ordinary practice licenses him to apply the rule in the way it strikes him" (Kripke (1982), 88). According to Kripke, the social practice does not determine what to do, if one is on his or her own, since it is only within the community and its sanctioning the actions of a single person that we can speak of obeying a rule. Again, "… considered in isolation, the notion of a rule as guiding the person who adopts it can have *no* substantive content" (Kripke (1982), 89). All depends on how the notion of isolation used here is spelled out. Kripke's

[54] "Habe ich die Begründungen erschöpft, so bin ich nun auf dem harten Felsen angelangt, und mein Spaten biegt sich zurück. Ich bin dann geneigt, zu sagen: 'So handle ich eben.' (Erinnere dich, dass wir manchmal Erklärungen fordern nicht ihres Inhalts wegen, sondern der Form der Erklärung wegen. Unsere Forderung ist eine architektonische; die Erklärung eine Art Scheingesims, das nichts trägt.)" (*PU*, § 217).

[55] Anscombe translates "So handle ich eben" as "This is simply what I do".

idea is that we could consider any individual in complete isolation by way of thought experiments. What we would have to say is that all she is doing is leaping around in the dark.

The reason, again, is that Kripke restricts the appliance of relevant predicates like "is following rules" to communities; they apply to individuals only derivatively. Therefore, strictly speaking, communities can be said to have normative practices primarily and it is only in a derivative sense that an individual can be called a rule-follower or practitioner. An individual can, properly speaking, not follow a rule.

Taking the stance that individuals cannot properly be said to follow rules on their own but only within a rule-following society, is somewhat irritating, since, if we cannot follow a rule genuinely and individually, we can, as Kripke claims, only leap blindly in the dark, instead of acting intentionally (see e.g. Bloor (1983); Kusch (2002)). This is not only strange from a theoretical point of view, for we miss an explanation of humans acting strategically and purposely, but it is also disastrous for concepts of individual responsibility. To my eyes this is by far reason enough to disagree with Kripke on this point.

We cannot make sense of practices – be they social or not –, if the subjects partaking in the practice or performing them on their own are not in command of what they are doing. Neither can we make sense of following a particular rule if there is generally no difference between a community *counting* something as an instance of following a particular rule and an instance of following a particular rule. The restriction 'generally' indicates that there may be practices which do not require this difference – determining something as latest fashion, for instance –, but this does not mean that this applies to all practices. The aspects of subjectivity and of objectivity, which Kripke fails to include in his account, are indispensable for an understanding of practices and hence they are indispensable for an adequate theoretical account of practices.

According to the alternative view I favour here, the notion of practice forces Kripke's notional corset open. Including its environment, physical and social, practice becomes objective, its notion is neither restricted to mere intersubjectivity nor is it opposed to the notion of objectivity. On the other hand, dispensing with privacy does not mean to rule out the specific role of an individual subject of rule-following either: the individual can be the master of her practice, she is herself engaged in following rules. Rule-following entails

both subjectivity as well as objectivity. In fact, we will see that one can only speak of objectivity as concerns rule-following in relation to subjects actually following rules.[56]

In the alternative view, then, Wittgenstein's paradox is even more radical than Kripke thinks. Wittgenstein shows how encountering the paradox of rule-following proves to be instructive. It teaches us that if we do not have an overview over the use of notions we might meet paradox. The predicates, "subjective" and "objective" both play their roles and can be used in connection with rule-following practices *pace* Kripke, who holds that they are not applicable to the same thing. Further, Kripke goes wrong in identifying 'privacy' with all subjective features of practice. Practices are public, not private. Thus, whether a practice is performed correctly and successfully by a subject is determined and can be evaluated from objective points of view.

Even Kripke's contention that the impossibility of a private language is proved by § 202 collapses. In that paragraph, the opposition is not between privacy and practice, as Kripke argues, but between privacy and objectivity:

> Darum ist 'der Regel folgen' eine Praxis. Und der Regel zu folgen glauben ist nicht: der Regel folgen. Und darum kann man nicht der Regel 'privatim' folgen, weil sonst der Regel zu folgen glauben dasselbe wäre, wie der Regel folgen. (*PU*, § 202.)

The crucial point of § 202 is not simply that rule-following is a practice but that it requires objectivity. In my reading objectivity does not exclude subjectivity, but indeed presupposes it (at least as far as practices are concerned), privacy has not been ruled out yet. Why one cannot follow a rule privately needs therefore further argument and is not yet included in the paradox of § 202. Wittgenstein's point is not to show that, in fact, individual and objective rule-following is an illusion. He rather aims at showing that and how objective rule-following by individual subjects is possible in avoidance of the paradox and without falling for Platonism or interpretationism. An analysis of the paradox of rule-following does not show that objectivity or subjectivity are impossible with social practice as sceptical solution but rather that presupposing Platonism and interpretationism and applying their notions of objectivity and subjectivity (and practice) leads to that paradox.

In the paragraphs from *PU*, § 138, onward and in the paragraphs in which the discussion of private language is usually located (*PU*, §§ 243 – 315), the conditions for being able to

[56] This issue is resumed in the last chapter.

understand something are at issue. Wittgenstein relates this issue to the question as to the conditions for learning to understand something, since after having raised the issue of understanding in *PU*, § 138, and a short discussion in the subsequent paragraphs, he gives the example of learning to understand a certain language game in which a series of natural numbers is written down according to a certain formation rule. Wittgenstein then goes on to ask, "How does he learn to understand this system?" (*PU*, § 143).[57] In the subsequent paragraphs, the issue of learning to understand is crucial in the line of argument leading to the paradox. While regarding rules Platonism seems to account for absolute objectivity, it breaks down in the face of the problem of showing how such rules can be grasped in learning. All we have is a finite set of instances. On the other hand, interpretationism superficially does account for learning a practice, but it is wholly unclear how the correctness of an interpretation can be determined in the face of infinite regress.

In § 243 the idea of a private language is introduced by claiming that it would be a language which in principle no one else is able to understand. Hence, by definition, private languages are not learnable. If the claim that a private language is not possible is taken to show, among other things, that there can be no language which cannot be learnt, then an account of how we get to understand languages is central to any account of languages. Languages must be learnable to be languages at all. We can even take a further step and hold that practices quite generally must be learnable to be practices at all. Therefore, there can be no private practice of following rules. If this is correct, then accounts of learning to understand and of learning practices form the touchstone of any viable solution to the paradox of rules.

2.6 Wittgenstein on Learning to Follow Rules

The number of examples of children and other persons in learning situation in *PU* is considerable. *PU* as already noted starts with a discussion of Augustine's view of language acquisition. Also, it is a defining feature of private languages that they are impossible to be learnt by others than the inventor (*PU* § 243). Hence, one would await a considerable amount of reflection on the role learning plays in the later Wittgenstein. Despite this, there

[57] I rectified the translation of Anscombe's.

is not much to be found.[58] In the following I would like to focus on two issues: firstly, on the role of training and the modalities of learning for what is learnt, and, secondly, on the relevance of switching between a subjective and an intersubjective or objective point of view.

Lets look at the role of training and the modalities of learning first. The rule-following considerations in *PU* start out in §138 with a question concerning understanding. After opting for a conception of meaning as use in the preceding paragraphs (roughly §§1–43), the question arises of how, within such a conception, understanding can be possible if we grasp the meaning of a word "in a flash" while the use constituting this meaning "is extended in time" (*PU*, §138).

In the subsequent paragraphs, Wittgenstein rejects various proposals until in §202 he gives the solution to the problem by claiming that rule-following is a practice. If the use of linguistic expressions is a form of rule-following, then this use, too, is a practice and understanding it is possible if I master the practice or technique (§199). In the following

Williams (1999) argues to the conclusion that, at least for fundamental normative practices, the *ways* in which we learn these practices is constitutive of *what* we learn. As concerns fundamental concepts she says:

> … learning plays a *constitutive role* in that how we learn (bedrock) concepts is constitutive of what we learn. (Williams (1999), 190.)

It is not quite clear what it means for the way we learn a concept to play such constitutive role for the content of the concept. Let's look closer at what William's claim might mean.

Certainly, we cannot learn, say, the political concept of separation of powers by studying colour shades on a rose bud. But actual cases of learning of this particular political concept may differ vastly. Walter might have learnt it in school, while Wanda lives in an absolute monarchy, mocked the Queen, and is put to jail on Her Majesties order without accusation or trial. Thus, it seems clear that the claim cannot be that the exact way of learning the concept is directly relevant to the content of the concept.

Williams' claim might allude to the similarities of all situations in which we learn the content and the relevance of the concept of separation of powers. The teacher might ex-

[58] See the short overview in Williams (1999), chap. 7, 188f. In addition to the authors mentioned in Williams, I would like to mention Cavell (1979), mainly on 168-190, and Williams (1999), chap. 4.

plain the concept by telling a story. Again, the stories told may be more or less helpful for an understanding of the concept. A story about a Queen with absolute power which is in its structural aspects just the same as the story Wanda would tell about her insulting the Queen may be quite helpful in this context. But we could surely find quite differing stories and other methods to teach the concept. It is not the exact, particular way we learn a concept which determines the content of it. Rather, it is the other way around: the content and practical contexts of a concept determine better and worse ways to teach it.

In the paragraphs in which Wittgenstein discusses different ways of learning to understand words, to associate them with pictures and uses in various paragraphs,[59] the point of discussion is that these associations are not centrally relevant to understanding. Understanding a word is, in the end, dissociated from particular ways of use and particular ways of having learnt.

Hence, what to make of Williams' claim? Her idea concerning the learning of bedrock concepts is similar to the issue of learning one's first language as opposed to learning a second language. The claim does not concern the understanding of each and every concept, but only those concepts which Williams chooses to call "bedrock concepts". Bedrock concepts are concepts for which we still lack the required techniques. In part 1 of this study I repeatedly pointed out that concept, or meanings, come in packs and not all by themselves. Their meaning draws on other notions to which they are opposed, with which they are contrasted, or to which they bear other comparable relations. This aspect is neglected by Williams. She takes concepts too much to be a singular affair – each concept its technique. Furthermore Williams fails to clarify what exactly bedrock concepts are. The concept of separation of powers probably would not count as such a concept. Bedrock concepts are the concepts necessary for "bedrock practices" (Williams (1999), 202), and it is not clear whether, say, political philosophy, would be counted as such a fundamental practice by her. However, the acquisition of the concept of separation of powers would definitely require quite some education in political philosophy. Furthermore it remains unclear how Williams would account for objective. As concerns the relevant features of learning bedrock concepts, Williams claims that "the individual is brought into conformity with a community" (Williams (1999), 206). Williams' strategy would probably be that objective learning (in the case of Einstein or in the case of prion hypothesis) does not concern bed-

[59] See, e.g. *PU*, §§ 6 (Vorstellungsklavier), or 139 (Vorschweben der Verwendung).

rock concepts. If Williams would take this line, I would claim that her concept of bedrock concepts and her concept of language are to narrow. This narrow focus of the claim can be put in line with Wittgenstein, as we have seen in the first part of the present study (see 1.5). Williams' principal aim is to explain initiation into practices and hence initiate learning.

If this is her aim, then the question remains, what exactly is meant with "how" in "how we learn (bedrock) concepts". The answer to this question may be any of the following. We learn bedrock concepts by way of examples; by way of specific examples; by being taught correctly by our teachers; by acquiring techniques of using words to express concepts. It seems that again there is not only *one* way, how we learn bedrock concepts. Learning a concept is acquiring a technique:

> … to adopt a concept is to acquire the technique. … What training is about is the mastery of technique. It is in virtue of this feature of technique that we can say that the process of learning (the training into a technique) is constitutive of what is learned (a concept). We do not have a concept without the technique of application, and we cannot display a technique of application except through the activity we call training. … The training we get is thus part of what we learn. (Williams (1999), 211f).

The idea that the technique of appliance of terms does indeed form the concept, and that the technique is learnt in connection to specific training, is certainly in line with Wittgenstein. However, it is not yet clear in what way the training constitutes a "part of what we learn". This issue will need further scrutiny (see 5.1).

The second aspect I want to point out in Wittgenstein's recurrent considerations of children in learning situations is the following. In Kripke (1982) it seems that these considerations of learning serve to demount the trust in our ability to follow rules. The present line is rather that Wittgenstein's reflections aim to point out that the learner is in a different situation compared to those who master the practice already well: the child, learning to master a certain practice and to follow some rule within this practice, is not, as her teacher, in the position to see the various alternative ways if proceeding and to choose one of them. This is why we cannot *explain* to the initiate learner how to carry on according to the rule, since our explanations would be meaningless to her – we can only train her and try to show her how to move on. The perspective of the initiate learner is not differentiated finely enough yet that she is capable to *perceive* alternative ways of going on. As soon as she is able to perceive alternatives, we can point them out to her; we can tell her where, how, and why

these alternatives go wrong from the point of view of a certain practice, and show her ways of going in the right direction.

In short, as soon as we master a particular practice, that is as soon as we are able to understand Kripke's objections, these very objections become obsolete. For the learner, Kripkean questions do not arise ("addition" or "quaddition"?). And the master easily can rule out such questions by reasons. Hence, if someone, be it a sophist or a sceptic, methodologically or mechanically draws the objectivity of well-rehearsed practices into question without any good reason, she drops out of the game completely. Wittgenstein and Putnam would both claim that to cast doubt on something, you need (good) reasons.[60]

Wittgenstein's considerations of learning are not concerned with developmental psychology or the neurophysiology of learning; he is not interested in ideal learning environments or didactical tricks but in the phenomenology of learning and the shift in phenomenological description between the situation before and the situation after something is learnt.

The main problem of individual learning of normative practices is, in fact, a problem of reconciliation of normative authority of practices and teaching with freedom, a problem which in its roots has already been stated by Kant (1803): How can a subject remain free if it has to undergo normative coercion in education? How is education to freedom possible?

2.7 Is There a General Form of Practices?

One of the main ideas at work in Wittgenstein's *Investigations* is not explicit any earlier than § 114, where Wittgenstein states that there is no "allgemeine Form des Satzes", no general form of sentences. This is the leading idea in the first hundred paragraphs. The idea, of course, is of vast importance. It is not only the definitive dismissal of all positivist quests for an ideal language but also the final deathly stroke for Kantian Transcendentalism seeking for an inventory of the conditions of the possibility of knowledge or, in our case, of the understanding language. It implies that the question "What does it mean to understand a sentence?" has no definite answer whatsoever. There is no such thing as an ideal language, no one form of sentences and no one set of conditions of possibility of understanding. This very same moral is what Hilary Putnam is up to in his work ever since he

[60] For an argument as to the incoherence of scepticism along these lines see, e.g., Putnam (2001).

published *Reason, Truth, and History* (Putnam (1981)). It was the burden of the first chapter of this book to mark out this point. Starting out from linguistic understanding, understanding of words and sentences, we saw that understanding language requires not only a grasp of syntax and semantics but furthermore a grasp of the situation, or practice, in which these words and sentences are used. Such ability of situational assessment, I argued, is not reducible to either syntax or semantics. For an adequate understanding of understanding language, syntax and semantics need to be supplemented by pragmatics. This puts an end speculations about the one general form all sentences.

Does the same question then arise on the level of practices? Is there one general form of all practices? As already pointed out in the introduction, the all too positivist dream of an ideal pragmatics or a transcendental set of ways of giving and asking for reasons it famously revived by Robert Brandom (Brandom (1994)). In his view, all practices ground on the same elementary normative I-Thou structure of giving and asking for reasons. Semantics, in this view, is supposed to be determined by normative pragmatics.

I take Wittgenstein's reflections on rule-following to argue against such a view. The semantics, or rather the understanding of a sentence cannot be explained in advance by reference to some normative pragmatics. Understanding a sentence requires an understanding of the structure of the specific practice it is used in. Putnam's reading of Wittgenstein is fundamentally opposed to the idea that there is but one structure of all human practices. The point of Wittgenstein's discussion on following rules, which by most scholars is located in §§ 143–242 of the *Investigations*, is simply that the very same considerations that suggest to enhance a theory of language understanding with a reflections on human practices in earlier paragraphs show that there can be no one single theory of human practices either. The upshot of the paradox stated in § 201 is that there is no simple solution to the paradox which would work in all cases or at all times. We can neither invoke rules, nor instances of following them, nor can we refer to past action, intentions or dispositions. Still, Wittgenstein is certainly not a sceptic but clearly marks out that rule-following and understanding language, for that matter, is possible without any doubts. His solution requires us to see that the problem arises if we start out from too simple a notion of rule-following. Following rules is not an action which could stand on its own but which has to be seen as being embedded in a practice. It is this practice which guides us in acting according to a rule. While Brandom might follow us till here, he would not accept the further claim that such practices may display a variety of structures, a variety of pragmatic struc-

tures which cannot be settled once and for all. In Wittgenstein, Augustine's question how a child learns language is the starting point of discussion. It is only after an intense discussion of how words and language get their meaning that Wittgenstein develops the paradox of following rules. The paradox is but one of a series of complications in explaining how language can be meaningful.

3

Learning Practices and Achieving Objectivity

In the following I will distinguish two cases of learning practices which already shone up in the discussion in the foregoing chapter. First we have to identify cases of learning in which practices are refined or changed. I call this "objective learning". Objective learning is learning in the face of recalcitrant experience. It has to be distinguished from mere acquisition of an already instituted practice by an individual which is not yet acquainted with this particular practice. I call such an acquisition of already instituted practices by an individual "subjective learning". Wittgenstein's paradox of rules does not merely include a paradox of subjective learning – as such it is presented in Kripke, or Quine – but it presents the further problem of learning in an objective sense. Any candidate for an adequate explanation of "practice" needs to provide an explanation of the relevant cases failure in understanding. Focusing on pragmatic reasons (in disregard of the two other levels identified and discussed in the first chapter, grammar and lexicon), I distinguish two general reasons for failure in understanding: subjective and objective reasons. Failure in understanding is central for the advancement of understanding. Apart from extreme cases, failure in understanding includes both subjective and objective reasons. Objective and subjective aspects of failure in the pragmatics of understanding correspond to subjective and objective aspects in learning practices. Subjective reasons of failure to understand point to a lack of subjective skills, objective reasons for failure to understand reveal a lack of objective practices or of the objective possibility to understanding something.

As concerns learning of practices, we may distinguish subjective skills to be developed to enable understanding of a practice from the institution of an objective practice itself (3.1). In developing the subjective skills required for an understanding of a practice, the subject acquires the relevant objective side as well. Again, the relevant notion of objectivity re-

quires more than simple causal determination. Objective learning needs to be fuelled with a substantive notion of fallibilism (3.2). To clarify these findings I analyze the practice of perception of objects as an exemplary case (3.3). Objective perception as a perception of objects as objects is not an interpretative affair in which objective data have to be interpreted by a subject. Rather, objective perception is a practice involving various understanding capacities which have to be developed and learned. Establishing a substantive – or normative – notion of fallibility and possibility proves fruitful in a positive account of the development of the capacities to perceive objects and in other cases of what I call objective learning, since it allows for an inclusion of modal perspectives on things, processes, and facts. Only an integration of such a modal perspective allows us to model the required substantial notion of objectivity (3.4).

3.1 Subjective and Objective Failure in Understanding: Exemplary Cases

Understanding an expression may not only fail for grammatical or lexical, but also for pragmatic reasons. Thus, there are subjective and objective reasons for failure in understanding.

First, imagine six-year-old Kate. She is familiar with uses of the word "pig" in relation to a certain animal. But assume that she is at a loss when this word is applied to John, a human. Kate just did not encounter the word used to classify humans before. She does not know that what is referred to with the word in connection with John is not his nature, as in "John is a human being", but rather his dealing ill. Nevertheless, we can easily help her understand. This is one case of subjective failure in understanding.

Second, take Tim who just graduated from high-school. He does not understand what it means to say that

[11] "the determination of the eigenvalues and eigenvectors of a system is of highest importance in physics and engineering".[61]

Tim will at least need to attend some courses in linear algebra to understand what this means. However, given Tim has some affinity to mathematics and some motivation to learn, he can get to understand it. This is a second case of subjective failure in understanding. Learning to understand in this case is more complex. The difference in subjective

[61] Quoted from: http://mathworld.wolfram.com/Eigenvalue.html [accessed on 02/15/2005].

skills between those who master mathematical techniques of the relevant level and those who do not master mathematical techniques is considerable. Learning to understand what is said in [11] requires years of mathematical training.

Third, think of Lynn, the molecular biologist, who is still struggling for an adequate understanding of what it means to say that prions "cause" prion diseases.[62] Since the "entirely novel mechanism" (Prusiner (1998), 13364) is not understood yet, we cannot simply explain it to her. There is nobody who knows. She cannot be taught the relevant practices that would yield understanding since these practices do not yet exist. To help her understanding we cannot just try to explain, as in the case of Kate, or to send her to university, as in the case of Tim.

The first two of these examples, the examples of Kate and Tim, concern what I call subjective failure of understanding. Kate is just not familiar with a particular use of the word "pig" in a situation which in her eyes has nothing to do with pigs. Tim is not familiar with a particular branch of mathematics.[63] Both Tim and Kate lack the practice of using a certain word, or the skills to master a certain technique. Their lack of understanding is on a subjective side; assuming sufficient intellectual equipment, both are in a position to learn to understand. Other people already perform the practice and might teach them in learning to understand.

Things are different with Lynn. She does not simply lack skills we could determine – the adequate practice to understand and explain what is going on does not yet exist. In this case, the reason for failure concerns rather the objective side of understanding. In the first two the reasons for failure concern the mastering of a technique, partly linguistic, which is already instituted. The last case concerns the mastering of a technique which is yet to be developed or refined. Up to some point, things are clear: Molecular biology is developed thus far that the prion hypothesis[64] is highly probable (Liebman (2002)). But still, the

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[62] See, e.g. "Prions are unprecedented infectious pathogens that cause a group of invariably fatal neurodegenerative diseases mediated by an entirely novel mechanism." (Prusiner (1998), 13364.) – Thanks to Karim Bschir for discussion on the subject.

[63] Such disciplinary branches form language games. For the relation between language games see section 4.4 below.

[64] The prion hypothesis is the hypothesis that the infectious agent causing transmissible spongiform encephalopathies does not contain nucleic acid and is a protein that can exist in two forms. One of these forms is the normal cellular form which is not infectious. The other is the infectious prion protein "that

mechanism is as yet not explained. While the cases of Kate and Tim are two gradually different cases of more subjective failure, the case of Lynn concerns rather an objective failure. It is not yet understood how prions work and it is even unclear what exactly prions are. The scientific practices involving prions which would unravel their sort of causing the new version of CJD, are yet to be developed. Such a development which yields an understanding and explaining of prions will be called "objective learning" in the following.

3.2 Objective Learning and Fallibilism

The practices we learn are themselves subject to development. They are subject to accommodation and refinement in accord to how the world is, to our means and abilities, and to what we strive for. Objective learning is the development and institution of new (or refined, changed) practices. Examples for such change of practices are theory change in science, new or refined methods and techniques. (The techniques and methods I have in mind are what in most countries can be registered as intellectual property.)

Objective learning may be the result of a single individual, or of the collaboration of two or more individuals. The level of organisation of such collaboration may range from a loose group to strictly structured and regulated communities. Consider, for instance, the theoretical consequences Einstein drew in his special theory of relativity. The seeming incompatibilities between the (narrow) principle of relativity of Galilean coordinate systems and the law of propagation of light led him to an "analysis of the physical notions of space and time" (Einstein (1956), § 7). In this case, one person was enough, to arrive at a new and more inclusive understanding of physics.[65] In other cases, as in the cheerless case of the development of nuclear weapons, a strictly regulated and structured community of scientists, technicians and a host of other professional staff are necessary to get ahead.

Scientific theories are not prescriptive. They do not tell us how reality should be, but how it is. Of course, we may expect nature to be one way rather than another because of our

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causes disease by converting the cellular form into the prion form" (Liebman (2002), 9098). This issue will be resumed later on (3.3)

[65] I do not take into account here that Einstein did not start from scratch but he based his reflections on the results of a scientific community going back to Galileo and Newton (at least). Phylogenetically we are not able to start from scratch again (at least not by mere will).

theories saying so. Often, however, nature's response runs counter to all expectations. Yet, this is not the mistake of nature but simply the error of our theory or inquiry. Nature can never be wrong, only our model of it can. Our theory is to blame, or our ways to test it. If there is a scientific law according to which some things are not possible –travelling faster than light-speed, say – we rely on these things being impossible. However, if we find out that it is possible all the same and this particular law is broken, we are urged to think about revising our theory to some extent.

This is not so in language or in moral philosophy. Take any moral requirement you like – you will find it being broken all over the world all the time. Notwithstanding, this fact will not lead us to a revision of our concepts of, say, human rights. Rather we will argue the other way round and say that it is not possible to act in disaccord with fundamental moral requirements and remain morally decent. Nevertheless, in a certain sense moral requirements may be used *to predict* which of various actions physically possible in certain situations would be *morally possible* actions, that is, actions in accord with moral requirements.

The same applies to rule-following practices in general. Let take a look at the example of addition discussed in Kripke (1982) (see also chapter 2). Insofar as all the physical or mental facts about an individual do not determine how to go on, the individual has, from a physical point of view, the choice to do whatever she wants; it is up to her. From the point of view of the practice of addition, though, there are strong restrictions concerning the possible answers to the question "What is the result of the addition of the numbers two and three?" From the point of view of the practice of addition, the only possible (in the sense of correct) answer is "five", any other answer is, so to say, not a possible move in the particular game. The answer "six" is not among the arithmetically possible answers, so to say. As in the case of violations of human rights, a certain number of wrong answers *alone* will not lead us to change the practice of addition. We would need better reasons to do so.

In the same sense, an illegal move of a chess player does not give reason to reconsider the conformity of certain moves. You cannot play chess with me if I do not, in practice, accept the rules of the game and act accordingly. The normative practice of playing chess is highly inert as regards recalcitrant experience. I would not know how experience running counter to the practice of chess playing could look like – chess is not in any way "put to test" in experience.

In sum, determining the rules which guide normative practices and deciding what accords to these rules and what does not, is not the sort of theorizing we come across in natural science. Nevertheless, does not this difference in the playing of the game between scientific inquiry and our normative practices pose a problem for the proposed broad naturalist conception of rule-following? A reconciliation of all these different games under one umbrella termed "naturalism" may seem impossible However, the difference between normative and descriptive relations to the world is not as fundamental as it suggests itself. Both relations, in fact, are normative; the difference depends only on what Haugeland calls the "direction of fit". The descriptive relation stands for a "world-to-rule direction of fit", whereas the normative relation stands for a "rule-to-world direction of fit" (Haugeland (1998), 305f).[66] Another rejoinder could be stated as follows: even though these different games have different structures, we might want to gather them under the same notion, i.e. we might have good reasons to do so (see *PU*, § 532; see also part III of Austin's paper on "The Meaning of a Word"[67]).

Such a view of normativity going both ways leads McDowell to claim that, if anything, experience can merely play an exculpatory role in Quine's structuralism (McDowell (1996), lect. 1). Experience cannot justify one structure rather than another that complies with it, too. Therefore, knowledge claims cannot face what Quine calls a "tribunal of experience", since everything that may be invoked just serves as an excuse, not as a reason. Recalcitrant experience solely *causes* revisions in the structure, its development being evolutionary with the fittest structure surviving. Hence, science develops, in Quine's view, blindly; it does not reason, but only guess shrewdly in the dark (Quine (1995), 46).

That Quine would not acknowledge this allegation is obvious in his picture of knowledge acquisition (Quine (1995), esp. Chap. 2). According to Quine, we start out from *global stimuli* resulting from momentary stimulations of our nerve endings, and then proceed by reacting to perceptual similarities between parts of global stimuli. From these effective similarities, we go on by forming expectations, by learning and developing habits – that is by what Quine calls "primitive induction". We then advance by "sharing information", starting to use language by handling grammar and logic, and simulating science with

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[66] Haugeland credits Anscombe and Searle for the distinction (Anscombe (1976) section 32; Searle (1988), 7f; see also the reference of Searle's in the note on 7.).

[67] Collected in Austin (1966), 55-75.

our "first faltering scientific laws", that is with "observation categoricals" (Quine (1995), 25). Soon bodies or objects dawn, indistinctly at first, but focused soon. These steps represent the advent of science, thereby, according to Quine, opening up the development of scientific knowledge and complex scientific theories.

Susan Haack blames Quine for wavering between two concepts of scientific knowledge, since at some places by this term he strictly refers to knowledge as a result of natural science, while at others he takes it in a less terminological way to take recourse to empirical knowledge in general (Haack (1993)). Although I agree with Haack on there being a tension in his use of these notions, in Quine's eyes this is obviously neither tension-carrying nor wavering. On the contrary, he deliberately uses terms like "induction", "expectation", and "learning" univocally as if they were continuous and (almost) unchanging all the way down to primitive forms of induction, expectation, or learning. In order to back up his natural history of our way to science, Quine renders the different stages of these phenomena more similar than they actually are. This fact prevents him from having to admit that in his description of how science develops onto- and phylogenetically, the primitive expectations we develop at an early stage and which we still share with some animals are different in kind from the expectations we develop in later stages of our development when forming and checking scientific theories. Holding primitive induction to be the cradle of science and observation categoricals like "When lightning, thunder" to be already "complete … miniature scientific" theories (Quine (1995), 26), Quine can deny that we might at some further stage develop forms of inquiry or of complex human practices that are other than scientific inquiry or practice; forms of inquiry that would allow, for example, for moral reasoning.

Admitting a tension would then mean for Quine to jeopardize his whole endeavour, since the continuation of primitive notions and complex scientific notions justifies his restriction to scientific inquiry. Even if Quine were right concerning continuation, danger would still crouch in another angle.

The mark of complex expectations (as opposed to Quine's primitive expectations) is their being prospective in the sense that there is not only a definite range of possible outcomes, but also a certain range of *impossibilia*. Haugeland puts it like this:

> What does it mean for phenomena to "make sense"? It means that they are accessible not just in their actuality but in their *possibility*. For the possible, as a (severe) restriction of the actual, can account for the fact that … within the conceivable, the actual has the determinate character it has,

> rather than various others (namely, others that are conceivable but ruled out as impossible). (Haugeland (1998), 352f.)

Expecting things to be this or that way is one characteristic feature of our rational relation to objective reality. Drawing matters with a broad brush, we might say that if our expectations prove wrong, the failure is either objective or subjective. That is to say that we may either reject parts of the grounds for our expectations as incorrect and claim that our theory was wrong or not fine-grained enough to account for the experience. Or else we reject some of our subjective contribution to our experience. Maybe we made a mistake in our measuring, or there were extraordinary circumstances of observation or perception (we may think about hallucination or a foggy sight).

The point I want to make here is that objectivity requires more determination than mere causal presence of reality ever may deliver. This "more" is reflected in the difference between perceiving an object in the sense of having a certain pattern of sense impressions and perceiving an object in the full sense in which to perceive this object is to perceive it *as an object* (Putnam (1999), 14; Putnam (1995b), 66–8). Let me spell this out.

3.3 Perception of Objects

The main result of our reflection on learning a first language was that learning a language does not amount to simply learning words (1.5). More generally, to be able to understand a linguistic expression one needs to be familiar with the practices in which this expression is used. The use of linguistic expressions usually does not allow for a reduction to other practices, in which the expression is not used at all:

> … the use of words in a language game cannot, in most cases, be described without employing the vocabulary of that game or a vocabulary internally related to the vocabulary of that game. (Putnam (1999), 14.)

These internal relations between the words used in a language game make learning a (first) language a real achievement.

Putnam discusses the following example: to be able to understand or use a sentence referring to tables, one needs, among other things, to be able to perceive tables:

> If one wants to describe the use of the sentence 'There is a coffee table in front of me', one has to take for granted its internal relation to, among others, facts such as that one perceives coffee tables. (Putnam (1999), 14.)

To understand a sentence in a particular situation does not only require language skills but a host of further abilities. As already noted, understanding language is not a stand-alone, self-sufficient skill. In addition, the sense of such a sentence – or of the perception, for that matter – is dependent on what goes on around the speaker, is dependent on relevant features of her environment. In the example, talk of tables is internally related to perceptual capacities.

These interrelations are not the same for all functions of language. Language is used to tell fictions, jokes, or true stories. It is used to persuade, to question, or to give orders. Such different functions have different aims, meet different standards, find different application and feature different logical and grammatical characteristics (Putnam (2004), 21f). In the same way, the interrelated skills required to use language in these different functions vary. The result of a combination of such is the extension of intellectual and practical power. Let me explain this in the case of perception.

Perception is among the paradigmatically required skills of linguistic activities describing reality and aiming at truth, at least in everyday life. If someone questions my belief that there is a coffee table in front of me, I may refer to my seeing or perceiving the coffee table ("I just see it!"), or my using the table to put down my coffee cup; not knowing what the other is driving at since the situation is all clear, perhaps I just respond: "What are you driving at?". In everyday conversation, each of these reactions is adequate and sufficient. My experience, my perception and my acting serves as justification and thus unquestionably takes on normative roles. I may appeal to these roles and to appropriate standards in a particular situation. Usually, at this stage and in everyday cases, no change of language game is required. This is evidence of the internal relation Putnam refers to. In particular cases, however, reference to perception would not count as appropriate. Take Lucy, for example, whose research group conducted a physical experiment in the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN. To explain her hypothesis about what exactly happened in the experiment, it would not be adequate to simply refer to her perceptions without drawing on appropriate proof procedures which are used in elementary physics or exact descriptions of how the experiment could be reproduced and her hypothesis tested.

The aspect mentioned as internal and normative relation is highly important. If we speak of seeing an object – a coffee table, or pink ice-cubes, say – we do not mean to say that taken in by way of perception are merely bare sense-data or blank colours and their

boundaries. Seeing, or more generally, perceiving, is taken in a "full-achievement sense, the sense in which to see a coffee table is to see that it is a coffee table that is in front of one" (Putnam (1999), 14). What is meant is not, so to say, blind, passive seeing of a mere manifold of sensual data; it is not some sort of "immaculate perception", (Putnam (1994), 287), but a seeing which is conceptually shaped. In other words, sophisticated perception itself is not separable from other intellectual and practical capacities:

> Seeing an object should not be thought of a two-part affair: a "non-cognitive" interaction between the object, the light rays, and the eye, as the first part, followed by "cognitive" processing in the brain. The whole affair is cognitive … . (Putnam (1994), 289.)

Putnam illustrates the issue:

> Suppose I perceive a resistor lying on a table. I know what a resistor is and what a resistor looks like. I am not supposing that I think the words "that is a resistor" (I rarely if ever think the words "that is a chair" when I see a chair), but I would be able to answer the question "what is that thing?". (Putnam (1995b), 66.)

This sort of informed, or as I prefer to call it, *objective perception* in Putnam is not an achievement of mere perceptual abilities. As linguistic expressions require a certain pragmatic link-up which depends on the sort of discourse in which they stand, perception is linked-up with, and is drawing on, intellectual and practical abilities. Compare two situations. Situation 1: Flynn sees a resistor, an object he has never seen or heard of before. Situation 2: Flynn sees a resistor, an object he just had the opportunity to learn about in physics class a couple of weeks ago; he also has conducted an experiment during practical lessons, and he even can see that it is a positive temperature coefficient (PTC) resistor. The situations can both be described from two different points of view, a subjective in which we take in account what skills Flynn has, and an objective perspective.

In the second situation, Flynn recognizes the thing on the table as a PTC resistor. He is subjectively aware of the thing on the table as a resistor and if someone asks him to hand over the resistor, he would exactly know what to do without thinking or asking and he could justify and explain his doings. This is perception in a "full achievement" sense (Putnam (1994), 458). In this case, the subjective perspective coincides with the objective viewpoint, since objectively it is clear that what Flynn visually focuses in both situations is a PTC resistor. While in the second case he achieves to perceive the PTC resistor as a PTC resistor, he subjectively is not capable to see a resistor in situation 1. In this case he fails to perceive the PTC resistor as such, the reason being simply that he does not know about

resistors and he knows neither what they are (for) nor what they would look like. Hence, even though from an objective point of view we might speak of him as seeing a resistor, he is not in the subjective situation to recognise it *as such*. (If he is capable to see objects and not only colours), he is able to see something laying there. The perception in the first situation has not the same conditions of being correct or incorrect as in the second case.

Matters are comparable in case of auditory perceptions:

> … if I learn the meaning of an Italian sentence that I did not previously understand, the way I hear that sentence will change. … I am aware that the sounds did not "change" … (Putnam (1995b), 67.)

Again, from an objective perspective, Claudia hears an Italian sentence with certain content. Since she masters Italian well, she is able to understand the sentence. However, before she learned Italian, she was not even able to split up the sounds appropriately into identifiable bits of words and sentences, apart from making any sense of it. Note that a scientific description or a recording of such physical phenomena triggering the visual or auditory perception by itself does not identify the objects as a resistor or Italian words. It may only provide a basis for a simulation of visual or auditory appearance, which our minds may perceive as resistor or Italian sentence. This phenomenon is not restricted to language. Imagine Alice hearing mice in the kitchen. As long as she cannot associate the sounds she hears to anything, she will not fail in what she hears (at least not in the same way). She may well fail to hear mice.

Traditional reductionist and empiricist accounts try to get a grip on these examples by claiming that there is a fundamental difference between objective and subjective descriptions or points of view. They claim the perceptual basis to be the same. The difference, it is argued, has its reason in the required intellectual and interpretative capacities. The idea is that what is perceived has to be *interpreted* correctly as a resistor or as an Italian sentence. To recognize a thing as a resistor or to understand a sequence of sounds as Italian sentences is to interpret the bare sensual intake as such. The empiricist idea must therefore further account for the interpretation of the bare sensual intake as Italian and as a resistor. Hence, this sensual intake is taken to cause the perception. Objective perception or perception of objects, they hold, is simply perceptual plus something like intellectual data processing. In this sense, a particular perception cannot justify anything, it is just a causally evocated intermediate that stands in need of interpretation. In the present view, however,

perception is taken to be a capacity which has to be learnt. According to Putnam, perception can justify statements:

> … once we think of hearing and seeing as accessing information from the environment … there is no reason to accept the dictum that a perception can only cause (and not justify) a verbalized thought. (Putnam (1995b), 67.)

The full sense of perception sketched here is comparable to the distinction in Merleau-Ponty (1947) between *voir* and *percevoir*. Seeing an object in the sense of *voir* amounts to having indeterminate impressions while seeing it in the sense of *percevoir* is seeing it as an object and including what Merleau-Ponty calls the "invisible". Only the latter is objective perception, that is, perception of an object in a full sense. Seeing an object in the sense of *percevoir* includes what is in fact invisible, as, for instance, its backside. It is essential for Merleau-Ponty, as it is for Putnam, that such visual grasping or intake is a *sensual* and not an interpretative intellectual achievement. The perception itself is objective. It is not only the interpretation of what is seen, which is taken as an object. The perception itself is informed. It is not merely an amorphous disjoint sequence of impressions.

Perceptual skills, therefore, are in the same way interrelated with other skills. Insofar it is fallible, and hence objective to some extent, perception is neither a stand-alone skill but as language understanding – apart from our fundamental, but basic sensual capacities – is dependent on other human skills and human practices (at least as soon as it may fail).

One of the consequences of these close intertextures of activities in language, perception, and knowledge is that my perception of something can be used to justify a sentence. What I perceive is not only neutrally delivering the content of my beliefs and utterances, as a merely physiological and neurological or other scientific description of what goes on might insinuate. Perceptions may take an authoritative role. Perception, like language and all other intellectual abilities, is not self-sufficient. It plays any of various roles in any of various intellectual endeavours. The interplay of these abilities enhances the options of intellectual achievement. Subjective skills may extend and enhance others of our practical abilities

> … the use of instruments should be viewed as a way of extending our natural powers of observation. But the use of language is also a way of extending our natural powers of observation. If I could not understand talk about "things too small to see with the naked eye", the microscope would be at best a toy (like the kaleidoscope); what I saw when I looked through the eyepiece would mean nothing to me. (Putnam (1999), 56.)

Such enhancement of one skill by another, however, is not in any case mutual interdependence. Hence, Putnam continues:

> The phrase 'too small to see with the naked eye' does not depend for its intelligibility on the invention of an instrument that allows us to see things smaller than the things that the naked eye can see … (Putnam (1999), 56.)

As to language, in relating the truth-relevant content of a sentence to the practice in which the sentence is used, truth itself is dependent on practice and aiming at truth in an assertion makes sense only within such a practice. However, not only is language dependent on various non-linguistic skills, but these skills themselves gain power in conceptual and, finally, linguistic differentiation.

Hence we properly speak of Flynn's "seeing his sister" or "perceiving that there is a coffee table in front" of him in a full achievement sense only if he (as an individual subject) masters the relevant complex interactions between his intellectual or conceptual, perceptual, practical, and linguistic skills.

Let me emphasize for point of clarification that view presented here does not claim that all perception must be conceptual or cognitive. Perception is a gradual ability. Only objective perception involves concepts and even new-born babies do perceive things in the sense of Merleau-Ponty's "voir". They just don't perceive specific objects, this is something they yet have to learn. Toddlers and certain animals certainly may see a resistor lying on a table. They are able react to their perception in certain ways, but these reactions are not yet complex enough to justify us to say that what they see is a resistor lying on the table. They simply do not have the subjective skills for such sophisticated perception. For babies to develop such skills, there is still a long way to go. For dogs, as far as we know, it is impossible to develop such perceptive and practical skills. To perceive objects as objects, for example, they need to be able to deal with them in specific ways in practice. To see a resistor as a particular object of certain measures and not merely as an arrangement of splotches of colours requires other skills than mere visual perception. It goes hand in hand, for example, with such things as being able to grab it and the like.

Let me explain this with another example. If Lionel sees a barn, in the full sense of seeing described above, he perceives it as a barn and not as a mere dummy, even if the dummy might cause just the same visual impression as the real barn. However, imagine Lionel growing up close to a huge movie studio in Hollywood, and imagine that for the film "The Barns" they built a whole bunch of dummy barns, that is to say they did not

build real barns but only their facades. Now if Lionel sees such a dummy, and knows that it is a dummy, in an objective and full sense he does *not see* it as a barn (even though it looks perfectly like a real barn) but merely as the dummy of a barn.

If we hear someone reading a text we understand, we hear her reading exactly these words and no others. If we hear someone saying the word "house", this hearing is determined phonologically in that it is neither "mouse" nor "station", and it is determined semantically in that it is neither a hut nor a tower, nor a mouse.

Language is not a practice on its own. It rather forms an irreducible part of practices in our engagement with reality. By the same token, perception is not a free-standing ability but rather forms a part in our world-involving practices. Perceptual skills themselves are not reducible to other skills. By the interplay with other capacities, perception becomes objective. Thus it contains, to put it in Merleau-Ponty's terms, also unperceivable parts of the object. Objectively hearing mice in the kitchen, Alice *really* perceives *mice*, even though she does not see, smell or in other ways perceive them subjectively.

3.4 Fallibility and Possibility[68]

The conception of a relation to the world having an objective, determinate character differs from Quine's "primitive" relation to an environment which is not determined in such an objective and normative sense. In Quine, the relation between mind and world is determined not normatively but rather causally. Haugeland, comparing human reaction to recalcitrant experience with a dog's reaction, explores the matter:

> Consider … how the members of a family are perceivable (on a corporeal level): each has his or her own characteristic visual appearance, sound of voice, odour, way of moving, and so on; and, of course, their various parts stay attached in the same way. But suppose, one day, all these aspects started permuting: what looks like Sister sounds like Father, moves like Grandma, and smells like Kid Brother. Even the parts could mix up: Mother's head (but Father's hair) on Uncle's torso with Baby's limbs – or just two heads with no limbs or torso at all (sounding like a truck …). And moments later, they switch again, with new divisions and new participants. What would you say? Surely something like: "Egad! Am I going crazy? Am I being tricked or drugged? I can't *really* be seeing this – it's *impossible*". That is, you would *reject* what you seemed to perceive, you would not accept them as *objects*. Now suppose that, instead of you, it were the family dog who came home to this. We can't ask what it would say, because dogs can't talk; and, of course, any estimate of its reaction at all is bound to be largely conjecture and prejudice. But, by way of counterpoint to sharpen the main point, I'll express my own prejudice: I think the dog would *bark*. I expect it

[68] See also Doğuoğlu (2007), sect. 2.

> would be disoriented and distressed, maybe even frightened. But I can't imagine any part of a dog's reaction amounting to a rejection of the scene, a discounting of its reality, on the grounds that it's impossible. Though Fido can tell Sister from Brother, and humans from cats, I don't think he can distinguish in any sense between possible and impossible. (Haugeland (1998), 261f.)

While our perception just like the dog's perception is caused by what goes on around us and by the way things *are*, human perception is furthermore objective in the sense that the way things *might possibly* be is constitutive for our expectations and for our coping with what goes on around us – if perception does not match up to these expectations, we first tend to react like the dog and simply bark "Egad!". But while the dog's coping strategies with objective reality are often already exhausted by its barking, we soon call our perception or other mental capacities into question ("Am I going crazy?"), take the circumstances, in which we perceive these strange things, into consideration ("Am I being tricked or drugged?"), and reject what we see as impossible or incoherent. Unless things alter or cease to happen again and again, we will probably widen the circle of circumstances to be reconsidered.

If our dealing with the world already involves such stepping back from our experiences, questioning and inquiring into their reliability, even more so does complex scientific research. Scientists are, most of the time at least, way beyond barking around if a situation they encounter does not match their expectations. They have quite clear ideas about which experimental outcomes remain within the range of the possible and which are not. A scientific theory does not only determine the actual state of the world but also what lies in the range of the possible. These ideas, however, do come under reconsideration if there are strong reasons to believe that they are wrong.

McDowell and Haugeland argue to the conclusion that science à la Quine does not attain objectivity in the sense of fully encompassing possibility and impossibility, because, as Haugeland puts it, Quine is not "letting entities be" (Haugeland (1998), 325–54). Quine does not see that both relations of fit, world to rule and rule to world, are normative. Our theories or expectations may fail in use. This is to say that they may fail in technical application, prediction, or explanation. To have a world-to-rule relation of fit, we must let things have "authority" with normative force. Thus, only "to understand the normative authority of objects, its source and its effectiveness, is to understand objectivity" (Haugeland (1998), 339).

Note that this point does not concern science or scientific practices. I already pointed out[69] that the critique raised against Quine presents a problem for his *philosophical* picture of how scientific inquiry works, namely his naturalism. If we conceive of our relation to things only as a *causal* and not a normative relation, we could not make out the reason *why* we fail, whether we fail objectively and for subjective reasons. Failure would just be a brute fact, and we would just know: there is something wrong. Note that according to the alternative picture Haugeland draws, things do not *by themselves* have normative authority, but rather that, to get objectivity, *we have to let them have such authority*.

Let me explain Haugeland's claim in recourse to prions again. Liebman (2002) sketches the history of prion research as follows:

> Early indications that the infectious agent responsible for scrapie [spongiform encephalopathy in sheep] did not contain nucleic acid led to several insightful hypotheses to explain this conundrum. Eventually considerable data came to support one of these ideas dubbed the prion hypothesis, also shown to be applicable to related fatal transmissible spongiform encephalopathies including Creutzfeldt-Jakob and mad cow disease. … The prion hypothesis has now been extended to explain phenomena involving other proteins. … A great deal of additional genetic and biochemical evidence now supports this hypothesis [i.e. the prion hypothesis] … Although the evidence for the prion hypothesis is compelling, a direct demonstration that infectious activity is caused by pure protein when in the prion form has been lacking. (Liebman (2002), 9098.)

The prion hypothesis consists in the claim that the infectious agent in spongiform encephalopathies is merely a protein. This claim is revolutionary since until then it was held that infectious agents always contain nucleic acid. Since prions do not, they are "unprecedented infections pathogens" (Prusiner (1998), 13363). As Liebman explains, scientific investigation has provided a great amount of evidence supporting the hypothesis (mainly by showing that other hypotheses fail to explain the evidence we have), but the infectious activity is not yet understood. However, most biologists working in the field agree on the prion hypothesis. What has this got to do with our discussion? What Haugeland calls "letting entities be" and "let objects have normative authority" is the step to supposing or (finally) acknowledging that there are with certain plausibility such things as prions.[70] If prions were in fact causing the disease, then if this were not acknowledged, one would go on looking for pathogens with nucleic acid until the cows come home. What Haugeland puts forward here is in fact the idea which Kant expresses metaphorically in his *Vorrede* to the second edition of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, namely that reason has to put

[69] See footnote 42.

[70] The name "*pri*on", by the way, is short of "*pr*oteinaceous *i*nfectious particles".

edition of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, namely that reason has to put nature to the test to really learn from it.[71]

Haugeland points out that there is an intimate connection between intelligibility and possibility:

> … the *objects* of perception, thought, and action are *intelligible* as the objects they are only in terms of some prior commitment on our part to the limits of what they *can* be. (Haugeland (1998), 298.)

Accepting Quine's view of how we learn from nature, we would not be able to make sense of this set of other notions which figure prominently in Putnam's charges of unintelligibility: modal notions like possible, impossible, or necessary. Putnam raises the same point. As we have already seen (1.5), In his discussion of the BiV-scenario, Putnam reflects on the sort of argument he is presenting and claims that it is an inquiry into what is "reasonably possible" (Putnam (1981), 16). As Putnam puts it in his paper "Possibility and Necessity":

> … our mechanisms of reference serve to determine not only what is actually water, but also what is possibly water. (Putnam (1983), 68.)

These "mechanisms of reference" are embedded in our practices of language use. Both the way we refer and to what kind of objects we refer, are dependent on our language game. In other words, it is dependent on the practices in connection to which we use our language. Talk of what is possible, of possible worlds, or of what is conceivable and what is not, is in the same way restricted by our practices:

> If we take the view that possible worlds are basically linguistic objects (say, maximal consistent sets of sentences in some language, or some subset of these), then Kripke's work reminds us that not *every* maximal consistent set of sentences can be regarded as a 'possible world'. (Putnam (1983), 67f.)

Quine misses the modal dimension of reference and of objects in his causally determined world. And it seems he is fully aware of the fact that he does so by sticking to an extensional language (see Quine (1995), chap. 8). However, by leaving aside the modal aspects of the world, he cannot account for how we are able fail, neither in science nor in percep-

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[71] "Die Vernunft muss mit ihren Prinzipien nach denen allein übereinkommende Erscheinungen für Gesetze gelten können, in einer Hand, und mit dem Experiment, das sie nach jenen ausdachte, in der anderen, an die Natur gehen, zwar um von ihr belehrt zu werden, aber nicht in der Qualität eines Schülers, der sich alles vorsagen lässt, was der Lehrer will, sondern eines bestallten Richters, der die Zeugen nötigt, auf die Fragen zu antworten, die er ihnen vorlegt." (Kant (1990), 18)

tion. Thus he puts not only one of the central parts of his naturalism in jeopardy. He furthermore fails to account for any substantive notion of objectivity or normativity and cannot account for the difference between a subjective and an objective point of view. The subjective point of view is for Quine the root for problems of contextual opacity in intensional idioms as well as concerning counterfactual conditions and modal predicates. In the view presented here, it is clear that contexts remain opaque as long as the pragmatic context is not taken into account. In fact, the problem of opacity does not only occur in intensional, modal or quotational constructions but also in simple sentences with co-referential terms as: "Clark Kent went into the phone booth, and Superman came out" (see Saul (1997), 102).

Quine describes scientific research as a blind process advanced by "good scientists" in "shrewd guesses"; the only "normative domain within epistemology" is the "art of guessing, or framing hypotheses" (Quine (1995), 46f.). This art of guessing seems to constitute nothing more than a supplement to epistemology. This view does not acknowledge that scientific theories are not stand-alone systems of sentences, but are practices. The picture that practitioners cannot step out and reflect on these practices, their origin, and the reasons for their specific structures is wholly misguided. Again, good scientists in usual circumstances know quite well what they are doing and what objects they deal with. Let me emphasize that my position is critical towards a certain philosophical model of science and not at towards science as such.

4

Reflecting on "Practice"

In contrast to the intense discussion on practice in the last decades, the notion "practice" cannot be said to have had too much attention. Even though there is a considerable multitude of studies concerned with the issue of practices in relation to the rule-following considerations in Wittgenstein, we find "practice" clearly analyzed and marked off for the first time in Brandom (1994) and later studies drawing on his work.[72] Practice and its cognate notions – technique, custom, and institution – remain rather underexposed in the seminal work of Baker and Hacker (1985). No definition and no clear-cut examples are provided; neither is the lack of definition or examples in Wittgenstein mentioned. There is only a general negative delineation from what is called "social practice" in contemporary discussion, the target certainly being Kripkean interpretations. Brandom, on the other hand, shows no particular effort to provide an analysis of Wittgenstein's notion of a practice. His main aim is to develop what he takes to be the pragmatic basis necessary for an explication of semantics. The mark of linguistic practices is that they contain performances which "are accorded the significance of assertions" (Brandom (1994), 172). Wittgenstein's view of language games and of practices is wider, however. One certainly may hold it not only being unnecessary but simply impossible to define practices. We had better look and see how the term actually is used than think up how it should be used (PU § 66), since it is just the crucial mark of practices that they cannot be marked down once and for all. Searching for a definition or a definite analysis of the structure of all practices clearly runs counter to Wittgenstein's Investigations (compare section 2.7). In this spirit, various features of practices have been identified in the foregoing chapters: Firstly, we found practices to be subjective in the sense that they are performed by subjects. Secondly, practices were found to be contextual. This feature has it that performances may fail for various objective or sub-

[72] See for instance Esfeld (2001) and Esfeld (2002a). For earlier discussion of the notion of practice in Wittgenstein see ch. 10-11 of Hacker (2001) (both co-authored with Gordon P. Baker).

jective reasons. The success of performances and what doings count as successful performance is – at least for most practices – dependent not only on the performing subject or a community but on objective matters as well. Practices thus are objective. The interdependence of subjective and objective (and intersubjective) factors concerning successful performance is relevant for a further feature of practices: normativity. A fourth essential feature is learnability – practices are not private but may be learned (and taught) by subjects with the relevant subjective capacities. All these features add to a fifth relevant feature we already encountered: the evolutionary aspect of practices, namely the fact that practices develop by being changed, refined, accommodated, and transposed. In the present chapter, I will determine further features of the notion of practice.

Since the notion of practice is notoriously underexposed in contemporary philosophy, it is instructive to look at Aristotle's use of the notion of practices (4.1). Aristotle's view complies with Wittgenstein's (4.2) and Putnam's (4.3) to large extents. I will then discuss problems arising from Putnam's idea that there is an irreducible plurality of linguistic practices. To this aim, I shall review Putnam's reflections on the relations linguistic practices can have to each other (4.4). One of Putnam's central ideas concerning the relation of linguistic practices, conceptual pluralism (a broader version of what Putnam initially called "conceptual relativity"), seems to be under severe attack by the arguments in Davidson's famous paper "On the very idea of a conceptual scheme". Hence, to close this chapter, I will have to address the issue why Davidson's critique of the third dogma has no bearing on Putnam's idea of conceptual pluralism (4.55.1).

4.1 Aristotle on Practice and Related Notions

The notion of practice is introduced as a philosophical term by Aristotle.[73] In his philosophy, the notion is a fundamental concept. While he does not present a handy and ready-made definition of practices, Aristotle counts human performances in general among the practices and distinguishes three fundamental and exclusive ways of *practice* in this wider

[73] For the following see especially *EN* I-IV (Aristotle (1962)) and Phys. III (Aristotle (1950)); see also Buddensiek (forthcoming).

sense:[74] *poiesis*, *theoria*, and practice in a more narrow sense. *Poiesis* aims at production and finds its fulfilment in arriving at what is to be created. *Poietic* activity points beyond at its purposive product or at the result of the activity. Success of *poiesis* is achieved with the perfection of its product. The purpose of the activity is the product. The specific aim of theoretical activity, on the other hand, is contemplation.

Theoria, on the other hand, aims at truth. Aristotle is the production of anything but to obtain truth. Its purpose, in other words, is truth. Theoretical activity is successful if it matches up with what is true.

In contrast to these result-oriented practices, practice in its narrower sense is a self-purposive activity. This sort of human activity does not point at something else. There is no purpose outside of the activity. The achievement and success of practice narrowly conceived is simply its performance. The mark of human practice is that it is based upon "freely deliberated decision" (*prohairesis*) focussing a certain end. The activity is completed or fulfilled in taking the steps to reach this end.

Practice narrowly conceived is specially linked to moral life in Aristotle, or more adequately – since "moral" bears its terminological baggage from the history of philosophy – it is linked to the leading of an individual life. For Aristotle, successful living is a practice in this narrow sense; the end or success of life is reflected in every moment of living ones life, and not, so to say, discontinuously in reaching certain stages. Thus, whether a particular human life is good or not is not determined *ex post*, but is exhibited in every moment and in every activity. Successful living is not bound to an achievement whatsoever.

By the same token, at each point of a practice one can fail. Practice requires steady and continuous deliberation and reconsideration in going on. This is to say that in each moment of one's life one can fail to proceed correctly. Leading a good life, therefore, is an ongoing practice and requires continuous re-evaluation.

While *poietic* activity requires steady and continuous deliberation, reconsideration and re-evaluation, it finds its end sometime. *Poietic* activity has to come to an end before it can be assessed. Interrupting it is to inhibit the final goal, while the interruption of a practice (in the narrow sense) just inhibits further performance without lessening the value of the practice that has been performed up to this point.

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[74] See *Met.* 1025b18ff (Aristotle (1975)); *EN* 1139a25.

Note that as a consequence of this view, there are no absolutes in humans or their actions, neither absolute evil nor absolute good. The good may well fail sometime. It may as well be that the bad one gets on a better track. This view leaves us with a strong notion of responsibility since what people do is up to their own will and responsibility.

As was pointed out in the beginning, these terminological coinages notwithstanding, there is a laxer use in Aristotle according to which the notion of practice is neither simply contrasted with *poiesis* nor with *theoria*, but is used as a generic term for human activities including inner activities (theoretical speculation and *poiesis*) as well as exoteric action. The categorical differences between activities which remain within themselves, which are purely performative and self-purposive on the one hand and activities aiming at something outside the action, at a purpose or a detachable product are what specify the notions. Presupposing these differentiations, activities in Aristotle are not strictly classifiable once and for all. What a particular activity amounts to is relative to our focus and interest. Walking may be a self-purposive practice if one just goes for a walk and strolls around. Still, going for a walk may be also an activity aiming at a certain goal, namely if one goes for a walk to promote one's health.[75] In the same vein, all one is doing in one's life may in fact be *poietic* activity resulting in products, and still it may be that all these activities count practically as leading a good life.

In Aristotle, none of these sorts of human practices and performances, be they theoretical, *poietic*, or practical, is bound to one and the same sequence of actions. The sequence of action that amounts to performing a particular practice, as well as the sequence of action that results in a certain product, is dependent on the situation in which these actions are done. Different situations require different actions. It is in mastering such different situations that an individual's competence of performing certain practices shows itself. A sequence of actions cannot in any case be adopted in completely new situations without reconsideration.

Let me illustrate this point with an example. Helping someone consists in a wide variety of possible actions. Some actions amount to helping in some situations, others in others. Consider helping Elisabeth, my great-grandmother, to get on the train, and helping Flynn with his homework in mathematics. The sequence of my actions is completely dif-

[75] The example is used in Ritter (1971ff), vol. 7, col. 1284f.

ferent. The question as to which course of action counts as the actual and proper performance of a certain practices is, among others, dependent on the situation in which the practice is to be performed. My helping can therefore consist in a wide variety of different doings. The same practice, the same complete acting, or performance may consist in very different series of actions. In ordinary cases, competent, that is sufficiently trained, or educated individual subjects know which course of action amounts to a performance of the practice. It is part of the initiation into a practice, to confront a learner with strange or slightly extraordinary cases and to show her how to react intelligently. Well-trained individuals, for instance, will try to perceive the situation as a special case of well-known situations or consider it in new lights, to extrapolate the practice onto the new case, reflect on what is reasonable to do, or ask other people.

As already mentioned, parts of a practice may themselves be practices. Teaching, for instance, consists of various actions; speaking is among these. Still, both, speaking and teaching, are practices. In relation to teaching, the speaking is purposeful, and it is used as a means for a certain end. In itself, speaking is a practice. Furthermore, speaking remains a practice, even if my aim to teach fails (if nobody is there to listen for instance).[76]

Let me highlight another feature which was already touched in saying that practices require continuous re-evaluation, namely the fact that in Aristotle, we, as subjects, as actors, or as performers, are in control of what happens. This means two things, namely first that as performers we are in guidance until the practice as was intended is brought about, and second that we may fail in such guidance, or we may go wrong.

A final feature I want to draw your attention on is that speaking of "failing to perform a certain practice (correctly)" amounts to saying that, while there may be a host of actions, or practices been done, no complete, coherent practice results. My actions do not form a complete whole. Such fragments of performances might be called "trying to teach" or "trying to help" etc. Often, however, our uses are not uniformly. Let me take teaching again. Sometimes we use it to name a practice which indeed fails if nobody is there to listen (or if nobody is listening), or to name a *poietic* activity which is declared to have failed if we fail in PISA-studies, or we use it as a practice which is performed even if nobody is listening.

To sum up, in Aristotle, practices feature the following properties: they are complete, self-purposive, responsive to context, and normative. In every moment they are complete

[76] Cp. Phys. III 3, 202b5-8; see also Buddensiek (forthcoming), ch. 3.

in the sense that proper performance entails success. Their purpose rests in themselves. What counts as performance of a certain practice may vary vastly in different situations and may consist of a series of very different actions or doings, in this sense they are responsive to context. Finally, a performer may fail in her performance – practices are *normative* in the sense that there are correct and incorrect ways to perform them; at any point the agent may fail and make the wrong move or act in discordance with the practice. From the last two of these features we might derive a fifth central element of practices: the responsibility of the agent. The normativity of practices entails that the agent is responsible for her performances and actions.

4.2 Wittgenstein on Practice and Related Notions

There are hardly any studies on both Aristotle and Wittgenstein,[77] and, to my knowledge, no one has yet been concerned with the relation between their notions of practice. One reason might be that Aristotle's practical philosophy has not been recognized as relevant for theoretical philosophy as yet. Notions like "virtue" or "character" have only recently been introduced into epistemology and other areas of theoretical philosophy from practical philosophy.

Another reason might be that Wittgenstein does not use the term "Praxis" extensively. There are only six occurrences of it in the first part of *PU* (§§ 7, 21, 51, 54, 197, 202),[78] and none of these occurrences is particularly terminological. The small number of uses itself indicates that "Praxis" is not used as a term. In addition to this, we know that Wittgenstein's aim is not to put forward theses or theories. Neither is terminological fixation his business. The notion "practice" is used in relation with various other notions. Mainly "Technik" and "Sprachspiel" (or "Spiel", for that matter), but also "Gebrauch" and "Verwendung" allow to clarify the use of "Praxis" by contrast.

In *PU*, "Technik" is used a bit more often than "Praxis". It is mainly used in connection with application (§§ 262, 557), in context with mastering, learning or understanding

[77] There is a paper by Putnam ("Aristotle after Wittgenstein", collected in Putnam (1994), 62-81) and two recent papers by Pelczar (2004) and White (2005).

[78] I focus on *PU* here. The number of hits here and in the following are determined by a search for the terms and flexed versions in Items 227a and 227b in Wittgenstein (2000).

(§§ 150, 199, 232, 692), in relation with customs ("Gepflogenheit"; §§ 199, 205, 337), or in relation with games (§§§ 125, 205, 337). The word is used in relation to the capacities or abilities of subjects, hence the occurrences with application, mastering, learning and playing games. The uses of technique are focussing on the subjective part of understanding, of performing practices, or language use (see §§ 125, 150, 199, 262). The subjective technique is applied (§ 262), and exists, so to say, as custom or institution (§ 232), dissociated from the particular practical context and situation. It finds its application in an actual practice, in an exemplification of a practice, like in a particular (language) game.

Thus, practice is technique in appliance. A particular case of mastering a technique is a particular case of performing a practice. It would make no sense to speak of "mastering a practice". What is mastered by an individual is the technique. However, this does not require only that the individual has the technical skills required. To master a technique, one has to have skill of applying the technique to various situations. It is only in the application of a technique in a particular situation that we have an instance of the performance of a practice. Only if such appliance is in the range of the individual's practical competences, she is properly called "to master the technique".

Imagine David following a particular rule correctly, but by pure coincidence. Assume that he does not master the technique. Imagine Daphne following the same rule correctly. Assume her to master the technique and follow the rule not by pure accident but intentionally and fully conscious. Assume further that both perform exactly the same sequence of actions. Further, consider Damian, an inhabitant of a Chinese room. Assume he is trained to hand over the correct signs for a number of cases. For some cases, even a machine can be programmed to "do the same thing" from an objective point of view. We could objectively say that David, Damian and the computer "do" just the same thing as Daphne in a given context and in certain situations, namely the specific situations they are programmed for. Still, there is, by definition a difference. It is just the point of speaking of practices or of following rules that there is a difference between Daphne, David, Damian and the computer. Daphne is called "mastering a technique" if she is able to apply the technique in any of various types of situations, and not only in one type of situation. She is counted as following a rule if she can apply it in any of various exemplifying series of actions. Such subjective ability of appliance is part of our concept of following rules or mastering techniques. As already pointed out: techniques need appliance. In most cases, the appliance of the same technique in different situations amounts to actually doing different things. The

exact appliance of the technique, though, is a matter of considering and assessing the relevant aspects of the situation correctly. At least in this respect, Daphne proves to be ahead of the others.

As in Aristotle, therefore, practicing in Wittgenstein does not amount to doing the same series of actions every time. To perform a practice is to knowledgeably apply a technique in certain situation. This is the reason why a particular instance of following a certain rule may be instantiated by completely different courses of actions. This difference, by the way, is displayed in Wittgenstein's difference between the general "Gebrauch" of a term and its particular "Verwendung" in a situation, a difference which does not show in English.[79] In Wittgenstein, practices are not mere means to reach a result, but are self-sufficient.

The notion of practice in Wittgenstein finds probably its paradigmatic exemplification in the notion of "language games". While I noted above that "Praxis" hardly occurs in the first part of *PU*, "Sprachspiel" (or a flexed version of it) is used 51 times. The concept of language games, as "practice", displays the feature of completeness to a certain extent. Speaking a language or playing a certain language game is a form of practicing in Aristotle's narrower sense: We may be interrupted in our speaking or playing game, but still said something or played game. Playing soccer or tennis or chess might be seen as such practices if it is just the play itself which is in view. As soon as we take, say, a chess tournament or Roland Garros, a break off amounts to inhibiting a result. It was no chess or tennis *tournament*, for it was not completed. Still, after completion, we can take the tennis match as a practice in Aristotle's broader sense (Poiesis), since every constitutive part of it has been a part of the match. It is important to note, however, that constitutive parts are not essential parts – the match could have had other constitutive parts (Federer could have lost the second game instead of winning it), and the result of the game, the fact that Federer won, might have been different, too. It is part of the practice of playing matches that Federer might have lost, even though at the moment he plays invincibly. Democratic elections

[79] The difference is not explicit in Anscombe's translation (Wittgenstein (1958))). To render it explicit, I would propose to translate "Verwendung" in cases in which it means a single use with "use" and "Gebrauch" as the practice and the reason of these singular uses with "usage". This translation conforms to some of Wittgenstein's own texts in English, in which sometimes "usage" is his term of choice, cp. e.g. "The connection between these two ideas is that the mental experiences which accompany the use of a sign undoubtedly are caused by our usage of the sign in a particular system of language." (Wittgenstein (2000), item 310, p. 3.)

and ballots are practices in the very same (*poietic*) sense. Elections or ballots as matches have constitutive parts.

A language game may, as any other game, consist of different parts which themselves count as self-sufficient language games on their own. Playing a tennis match consists in playing a series of sets, which in turn consist of playing a sequence of games, etc. Thus, self-sufficient practices in Wittgenstein (practices in Aristotle's narrow sense) are intimate parts of result- or purpose-oriented practices (i.e. practices in Aristotle's wider sense). But the relevant features

There are limits to what still counts as playing one or another language game. Certain actions or doings which count as a move in one language game, might count as a move of another language game. It is not necessary that one singly action-unit already counts as an instance of this or that game, but it is the course or series of action which makes the action an instance of one or the other game. Still, we can count a series of ball rallies as an instance of playing tennis. That makes the drawing of lines between what may count as a move of a certain language game and what may not, or of what language game is played or not, as a matter depending on various questions of standards or relevance.

Further features of practices in Wittgenstein have already been discussed in previous chapters: Practices are normative, objective, subjective, learnable and they are up to revision and refinement. Practices are normative in the sense that it is generally determined which course of action counts as performing it, and which does not. Practices furthermore are objective in the sense that it is objectively determined what counts as performing a practice and what does not so count. Alternatively, in Wittgenstein's terms, there is a difference between believing one is performing a practice and actually performing the practice. Another aspect which has already been discussed at length is that practices have subjective aspects in the sense that it is subject which perform these practices. These subjects are themselves in command of their performances. In the same vein, they are responsible for what they do. Further, practices must be learnable; they can be acquired by practitioners who can refine their technical skills and their practical abilities in application. Finally, practices are up to revision, change, and refinement; we are able to find new ways of coping with our environment.

The main difference between Aristotle and Wittgenstein concerning the notion of practice is the connection to morality. While in Aristotle the issue of leading a good life is in-

ternally connected to the notion of practices, such a connection is not explicitly excluded but does neither seem particularly relevant in Wittgenstein. Also, the notion of practice as used in Wittgenstein matches rather with the more general classification in Aristotle than with the more specific use. In Wittgenstein practices include *poiesis* as well as *theoria*. However, while the notion of practice is not restricted to these issues of leading a good life, they are neither excluded.

To sum up, the accordance between the features of practice in Aristotle and Wittgenstein is striking. The features of the notion in Wittgenstein comply largely with the various features Aristotle's notion of practice exhibits. (Hence, the lack of contributions in this area is surprising.) In Aristotle and Wittgenstein, the relevant notion of practice (in a narrow sense) is determined by being self-purposive and closed. For subjects to be able to perform a certain practice amounts to them mastering certain techniques. These techniques find appliance in specific and particular situations. There are ordinary and extraordinary situations. In ordinary cases, the technique is applied "blindly" (cp. *PU* § 219). Performing a practice does not consist in a determined sequence of actions due to the situativity of performance. Following a certain rule may amount to doing very different things. Finally, there is an importantly relevant difference between an objective and a subjective point of view. Indeed, "the methods" of philosophy Wittgenstein eventually hopes to find (*PU* § 133), the methods which allow halting philosophical activity whenever wanted, seem particularly to be such self-sufficient philosophical practices.

4.3 Putnam on Practices

In recent years, various concurring attempts to explain the meaning of linguistic expressions by the practices of use and understanding have been put on the market. Among the most promising of these are the accounts of Quine's, Brandom's and Putnam's. Let me give you a very brief characterization of the three accounts, and then focus on Putnam.

Willard van Orman Quine prominently put forward a naturalist view of language use. What linguistic expressions mean can be determined at best by a scientific description of how, and when they are used. In such a description, no semantic or intentional vocabulary is at hand. Other normative notions not allowed either. In Quine's view, what an expression means is in the best case as finely grained as the description the best scientific inquiry

is able to give. Quine's view is controversial, however, and doubt is widespread whether this sort of naturalist account of meanings – or of use and practices, for that matter – is viable at all.[80] The naturalist account of practice Quine develops does not serve to explain satisfyingly how language is possible. In fact, it does not even give enough theoretical vocabulary at hand to explain satisfyingly how rule-following or normative practices are possible at all.

A second attempt to explain the meanings of linguistic expressions by their use is Robert Brandom's view which was already mentioned in relation with practices in general. In his seminal *Making it Explicit* (Brandom (1994))[81] a view on the meaning of linguistic expressions is developed which neither relies on semantic nor intentional vocabulary. In contrast to Quine, however, Brandom does not dismiss normative vocabulary on the whole but seeks to identify the basic normative terms which allow for an explanation of more complex semantic and intentional notions. According to Brandom, languages are a certain sort of social practices distinctively exhibited only by "knowers and agents" (Brandom (1994), xi). Such knowers and agents are rational and "concept-mongering". Distinctive for rational agents and knowers is that they play games of giving and asking for reasons. Such games of giving and asking for reasons – and language as a practice is such a game – are implicitly guided by a certain normative structure. Linguistic practices are deontic score-keeping practices of giving and asking for reasons. Brandom's project is to understand this underlying normative structure of linguistic practices by making it explicit. But Brandom, unlike Quine, is convinced that an articulation of the normative structure of language aiming at an explication of semantic and intentional content cannot do without normative vocabulary.[82] Still, even though the present account is sympathetic to this idea, it does not accept another aspect of Brandom's pragmatism. Brandom makes use of a "transcendental expressive argument" to prove the existence of objects.[83]

A third way to spell out understanding of language is in agreement with Brandom on the idea that we cannot avoid normative vocabulary. Thus it also sets itself off from a

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[80] Some of these doubts are articulated in 2.3 and following sections.

[81] See also Brandom (2000).

[82] See Brandom (1994), xi-xxii.

[83] Brandom uses such an expression in connection with the existence of objects, see Brandom (1994), xxiii.

"Quinine" naturalist approach to the use of language. However, it disagrees with Brandom's project in being sceptical about the idea of a fundamental language game, the game of giving and asking for reasons. Brandom is clear about presenting an account of how assertions, or declarative sentences work and about there being other ways language can be used (Brandom (1994), e.g. 157). Still, his account of the basic notions by which the semantics of language and the intentionality of thought can be made explicit, his account of score-keeping practices, is meant to provide an explanation of pragmatics in full generality. It is meant to yield a functionalist and foundationalist approach fully explicating the practice of language use and language understanding within a broader context of human practices. Brandom's analysis is path breaking, insightful and fascinating. Still, it rests on a functionalistic view of matters and therefore fails to account for the irreducible. Brandom presupposes there being but one logical form of all practices. The immediate Wittgensteinian objection raised against this claim may be put to the following expression: Why exactly should we expect there being just one determinate and not various possible forms or structures of practice? The present view promotes this latter and claims that "practice" is used in any of variously resembling ways, or, in other words, that practice is "*familienähnlich"* in Wittgenstein's sense and does not have one specific form (see section 2.7).

Taking this line complicates matters not only for pragmatism as a philosophical theory but also for the project of giving an account of practices. But there is a Wittgensteinian recipe to face these complications. The idea is to take close looks at examples of what we call practices, at how we learn "practice" and related terms, and at how these practices themselves are learned. Language use is probably the least disputed example of practices. An explanation of this paradigm of practices provides therefore a natural starting point for our study. The claim that there be just one general structure of practices is reminiscent of positivist's attempts to design an ideal language, even though in Brandom's couture it rather amounts to an "ideal practice" or even an "ideal pragmatics". By contrast, Wittgenstein and Putnam do not presume that there may be the one and only semantics or pragmatics of language. They hold that there is not only one single way in which all activities qualifying as linguistic activities bear meaning or reference. Neither is there one and only one way in which all activities qualifying as rule-following activities, or as practices, are normative.

The abilities required are not given to us, but have to be developed. We have to learn to identify what is said or what is done in certain cases. Once they we are skilled enough and master the required abilities, we are enabled to understand uses of language or human actions in ordinary cases and we are fit to reflect upon cases of lesser clarity and try and extend our intellectual equipment to language use or actions in such situations. The ability of reflection and evaluation becomes best visible in situations in which understanding is put to test, in extraordinary situations of various kinds in which understanding reaches limits. Therefore the verdict does not entail the claim that it is impossible to *teach* machines to understand at least some parts of human languages. But such machines would have to exhibit basic skills comparable to those of human and to be able to develop them by participating and engaging at least in part in human practices. For principled reasons, no full systematic and detailed account of practices of linguistic use and understanding can be given (see chapter 1). Such an account of the notion of practices allows for a more general understanding of the aims and prospects of contemporary pragmatism as represented in Putnam. Thus let us look closer at Putnam's notion of practice.

As Wittgenstein, Putnam does not explicitly define or otherwise clarify the notion of practice. Even though his usage is plurivalent, it is terminologically relevant. In some uses "practice" refers to everyday situations and appeal to our common sense and is used uncountable as in "problems we encounter in practice" (Putnam (2004), 28; see also Putnam (1994), 483). This use is explained as meaning "specific and situated problems, as opposed to abstract idealized, or theoretical problems" (Putnam (2004), 28). In a majority of cases, however, Putnam uses "practice" countable (and plural). This use coincides more or less Wittgenstein's use of "Sprachspiel". In Putnam (1994), for instance, "practice" or "practices" are specified as "linguistic" (497), "mathematical" (509) or "scientific and other institutions and practices" (504), as practices "of mental state attribution" (481), "of arithmetics" (513n.), or "of counting and calculating" (509), "of deduction" (509), "of employing 'marks and noises'" (515).

As in Aristotle and Wittgenstein, practices according to Putnam have components. Putnam emphasizes that there are cases in which these components may conjoin to a single complex practice:

> … scientific instruments and scientific ways of talking are both ways of extending our perceptual and conceptual powers, and those ways are highly interdependent; indeed, they can fuse into a single complex practice. (Putnam (1994), 502).

Since a certain practice may find expression in various ways, also the perception of an object within a practice does not mean to have always the same or similar visual impressions for a certain amount of time[84], but only to perceive it in one or another way. To take up the discussion from 3.3, perceiving mice can mean to see them, to hear them in the kitchen, to smell them, and sometimes a combination of these. Also, "seeing mice" can mean various things. As helping someone does not consist of a determined serious of specifiable actions, perceiving a certain object does not contain certain parts. What counts as a perception can, in certain limits be specified neither in advance nor once and for all times.

To sum up the last three sections, the features of notion of practice we find in Aristotle turn up both in the work of Wittgenstein and Putnam. Not only is there the aspect of *completeness* and *self-purposiveness*, but we find there also the aspects of *normative guidance*, of *failure*, of *freedom* and *responsibility*. Generally, also, practices display aspects of subjectivity and objectivity. Further, the reviewed authors agree that there is a *plurality of practices*. The idea of a plurality of practices bears the problem of how these practices are related to one another. This problem is virulent in case of linguistic practices. Hence, I will consider Putnam's answer to how language games are related in the remaining of this chapter.

4.4 Relations between Language Games

Putnam describes "*pragmatic pluralism",* an idea which lies at the heart of his philosophy, by referring to Wittgenstein and his use of "language games":

> … *pragmatic pluralism* [is the] recognition that it is no accident that in everyday language we employ many different kinds of discourses, discourses subject to different standards and possessing different sorts of applications, with different logical and grammatical features – different "language games" in Wittgenstein's sense – no accident because it is an illusion that there could be just one sort of language game which could be sufficient for the description of all of reality! (Putnam (2004), 21f.)

[84] To my knowledge, considerations about time are neglected in recent studies concerning perception. A recent exception concerning consciousness is Libet (2004). I do not think, however, that consideration of time would help us solve any philosophical problem of perception.

There are two related views to be distinguished here: conceptual relativity and conceptual pluralism. Pragmatic or conceptual pluralism is developed from Putnam's earlier idea he called "conceptual relativity".[85] Only recently Putnam started to distinguish more clearly various different relations between language games.[86] In Putnam (2004) he clearly restricts "conceptual relativity" to cases of conflicting or concurring linguistic practices, while he prefers to speak of "conceptual pluralism" in cases in which linguistic practices supplement, complement or enhance each other. Sometimes he terms all relations between practices as cases of conceptual pluralism. In any case, however, conceptual relativity is the more narrow phenomenon of language games conflicting and competing each other. Note that if Putnam discusses "conceptual relativity" in his earlier writings (before Putnam (2004)), what he usually has in mind is a not yet further differentiated phenomenon of conceptual pluralism in general.

The idea of both conceptual relativity and the later, more inclusive view, conceptual pluralism is a result of the rejection of metaphysical realism, or, more precisely, the rejection of the metaphysical realist supposition that there is "one true theory" corresponding to reality.[87] Pluralism then amounts to claiming that there is more than one true theory describing reality, relativity amounts to claiming that in some cases there are rivalling descriptions.

In this sense, Putnam claims that different language games or different "conceptual schemes"[88] which truly describe reality relate to one another in one of the following ways: (a) they are optional languages and hence are in competition and rivalry to each other (conceptual relativity), or (b) they complement each other and add to one another (conceptual pluralism), or (c) they are simply incommensurable.[89]

Putnam conceives of language games as differentiated by their standards, their applications and by their logical and grammatical features. These differentiating features mark off the language game as of a certain sort. Indeed, we find here the three levels that were

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[85] See e.g. Putnam (1988), chap. 7, esp. 109-113.

[86] Case (1997) suggests the wider notion "conceptual pluralism" for what initially Putnam calls "conceptual relativity". Putnam acknowledges this (Putnam (2004), 48).

[87] Putnam (1981), 211; see also Putnam (1999), 6.

[88] Putnam avoids the term in his recent writings and speaks of "languages" or "language games". Still, he used it earlier (e.g. Putnam (1981), 52, 215; Putnam (1987a), 17)

[89] See the discussion below which draws mainly on Putnam (2004), part I.2.

developed as conditional for language to make sense and be intelligible. The standards of a discourse determine the possible moves in a language game. It is one of the standards of scientific discourse, for instance, that any claim has to be justified in ways which are acceptable within the particular branch of science. Different standards of justification, among other things, are what distinguish these branches. If a claim is not justified in any way even though it would have to, it is highly probable that it is not taken seriously.

The grammatical and "logical" or lexical and syntactical features have been discussed at length in 1. Still, let me emphasize once more that even though the intelligibility of linguistic expressions is dependent on pragmatics, and even though the social and physical environment exerts an influence on the lexical meaning of a term and its grammatical properties, the levels of grammar and semantics do have their own standing. These self-dependent levels allow to apply language flexibly in different areas and to use it for various discourses. In this sense, language is a universal instrument. Still, this universality should not belie the fact that language needs to be applied. There is no sense in language without actual practice of language use in a context and situation. As was pointed out before, language is not a practice on its own. Only structured functional units which include all that is required for linguistic expressions to be intelligible are language (games).

Take sentences describing reality, for instance. Questions concerning sense and reference of such sentences cannot be separated from the objects of reference and the practical context in which these questions are posed; this practical context includes, among others, that the sentence is assertoric and aims at a true description of reality. While a single sentence has a certain meaning owing to its syntactic and semantic features, it fully makes sense only in regard to the context in which it stands. Its making sense is its being intelligible for competent speakers. Not all linguistic practices are descriptive in this sense, though. Logic, for instance, is one special case of a practice, which is not descriptive in the usual sense (Putnam (2004), 55–60).

As a pragmatist of a later Wittgensteinian colour, Putnam's remarks on conceptual pluralism are based mainly on paradigmatic examples which are apt show that there are various objectively true descriptions of reality. Again, as already developed in chapter 2, "objective" is not used to indicate complete independence of all human activities – this sort of objectivity has been abandoned with Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein. Rather, the predicate "objective" means to point out that there are ways in which what is taken to be

objective can prove not to be. Putnam's examples stem from different language games and cannot be reduced to one other without losing relevant aspects. Each of these language games has its own right at least insofar as it serves to describe reality for certain purposes or aims. Since every irreducible description has such a purpose, none of these language games can be prioritized in principle. Still, Putnam acknowledges that there are language games which are more important than others; that there are language games, e.g. scientific language games, which have more import than others on our lives. The idea of conceptual pluralism does not intend to be anti-scientific. It is critical only if scientific languages are taken to be the only languages in which objective truths can be stated. Such claims are not scientific but rather metaphysical claims.

According to Putnam's line of thought, speaking of a plurality of language games is to speak of linguistic practices distinguishable by their different standards, aims, applications and their grammatical, semantic, and logical structuring. These language games either compete with or exclude one another (conceptual relativity), they complete, or add up to one another (conceptual pluralism in a narrow sense), or else the linguistic practices are incommensurable (conceptual pluralism in a wider sense) and exist beneath one another (see Putnam (2004), 48–50).

Consider, firstly, conceptual relativity between language games. Putnam discusses the question whether to count mereological sums as among existing objects or not as an example of conceptual relativity. Carnap would hold that such mereological sums do not exist, while Lezniewski would hold that they do exist. There are two main strategies to deal with this ontological difference. One could hold that Carnap and Lezniewski contradict each other, or that "exist" in Lezniewski's claim has a different meaning than "exist" in Carnap's claim and hence, they are not capable to understand each other. Putnam argues, however, that both these strategies of explaining what goes on are wrong (Putnam (2004), 33–47). He claims that talk of mereological sums is simply an "optional language" (Putnam (2004), 43) which presents and opens up an alternative way of speaking. Apart from any agreement we may reach concerning the notion of objects the question may arise whether mereological sums exist or not. However deciding upon an answer is just "a choice between two specifiable ways of using words" (Putnam (2004), 45). But it does not follow only from differences in use that the word "exist" (or "object") has a different lexical meaning, still, as was pointed out in (A1.4), such a difference in use may yield differences

in sense and in truth-evaluable content of the sentences the words occur. For the same reason, such a difference in use has the consequence that Carnap and Lezniewski do not contradict each other on the level of their claims. Of course, he holds, "if we simply conjoin them [i.e. these claims], ignoring the different uses that they have in their respective optional languages, we get a contradiction" (Putnam (2004), 46). Such simple conjoinment however neglects the pragmatic level of how the words are used:

> ... if we understand each of them as belonging to a different optional language, and recognize that the two optional languages involve the choices of incompatible conventions. What are "incompatible" are not the statements themselves, which cannot simply be conjoined, but the conventions. (Putnam (2004), 46.)

The contradiction lies not in the two statements or claims alone, but in the pragmatic background which determines their sense.

Such optional languages differ indeed on a level of what to count as existing, and hence they entail ontological relativity. However, this holds only for the entities required by the optional language:

> … the "ontology" of a given natural language, ignoring the optional sublanguages that we sometimes add to it, is for the most part obligatory for speakers of that language … (Putnam (2004), 49).

Still, Putnam restricts conceptual relativity to languages for which the following condition holds. Each explanation of a phenomenon in one language game has a corresponding explanation in the other (Putnam (2004), 43). These corresponding explanations are cognitively or intellectually equivalent - if they are not, the relation between the two language games is not conceptual relativity. If either one of the two language games is superior to the other since it explains more than the other, then the relation between the two proves to be conceptual pluralism rather than relativism. In this latter case, the languages are not optional.

This equivalence in explanatory power is the reason to claim that the question as to which of the two languages is really the correct one is useless, and, indeed, does not make sense. Since both languages serve to explain certain phenomena in just the same way and with the same success, there is no point in asking for a decision as to which one is right.

The question remains from which point of view we might claim two optional languages to explain the same phenomena. The point is that conceptual relativity occurs only on the edges of natural language, where natural language is "... the language we all speak and cannot avoid speaking every day" (Putnam (2004), 43). Optional languages provide

extensions of natural language. They are not completely separate or independent languages but draw on their fundament, natural language. This is also the basis on which the difference in use can be made explicit. As concerns what Putnam calls "conceptual relativity", the rejoinder to Davidson is that there is well a common ground on which the differences in ontology can be determined. But on the other hand, Davidson is right in his claim that such differences cannot lead to "dramatic incompatibility" (Davidson (1984), 184).

Conceptual pluralism, secondly, is a more important and more pervasive relation between language games. Putnam (1988) discusses conceptual pluralism (sic![90]) by way of an example in which he enters a room with someone in which there are a chair, a desk with a lamp on it, a notebook, and a pen, and nothing else. Putnam starts questioning his subject by asking how many objects there are in the room. Usually, one would say that there are five objects, namely those enumerated above. If the person Putnam tests is shrewd, she might count also Putnam and herself and answer "seven". Putnam goes on to ask about the pages of the notebook. At this point the question is raised what *really* is to count as an object. The point of Putnam's argument is that depending on the metaphysical background different answers are correct. An Aristotelian, Putnam holds, would point out that the pages of the notebook do not count as objects as long as they are not torn out.[91] Putnam's nose does not count as an object for the same reason. What about physical particles? It seems we first need to determine what is meant by an object, but even if we decide on a notion of objects, a polish logician would claim that also mereological sums of these basic objects should count as objects. She would count also an object consisting of two parts (the pen and the notebook), and an object which consists of three parts (Putnam, the lamp and the desk), and all other possible combinations (Putnam (1988), 110–13).

What to count as an object is a matter of standards and aims, of interests. In daily life we certainly count tables among objects. Political science does not, neither does biology, or physics for that matter, even though of course it is a physical object and can be described in physical terms, it does not count as a *table* (with certain particular forms, shapes,

[90] In Putnam (1988) the term of choice is "conceptual relativity" without discrimination. As Putnam later points out, it is an example of conceptual pluralism rather than of the more narrow phenomenon of conceptual relativism ((Putnam, 2004},).

[91] In fact, Aristotle would not count artefacts among the individual objects (he would, though, acknowledge them as things). Thanks to Alexander Brungs for discussion on this issue.

and measures). Nothing in the physical description of a table would explain why the measures of a table should be in certain limits and not be exceedingly high, for instance. These measures are determined by practical human needs.

In this second case of relations of language games, the various language games involved and complementing each other share a common ground. Conceptual pluralism is encountered in various degrees. Even if two languages explain the same phenomena from the point of view of natural language, the explanations in two different languages have different aims and meet different standards – or else it is a case of conceptual relativity, the narrower relation between language games described above. Such explanations, it is assumed, are of different cognitive value and for some goals one explanation is better than the other. In general, though, different languages explain different phenomena, require different practical skills, and pursue different goals. Statements in different optional languages, we saw, seem to be contradictive and are in any case incompatible. In the case of conceptual pluralism, the situation is different:

> … the fact that the contents of a room may be partly described in the terminology of fields and particles and the fact that it may be partly described by saying that there is a chair in front of a desk are not in any way "incompatible", not even "at face value". (Putnam (2004), 48)

In this case, descriptions from different language games are not cognitively equivalent but their relation is to describe rather as cognitively supplementing, complementing, or endorsing each other. Such complementary language games are irreducible to one another; reduction or elimination of one of these games costs expressive means. The most important of these complementary language games together constitute what might be called the body of natural language. They add to the practices involved (e.g. perception) as well as to the objects they are committed to.

> … the ontology of a given natural language, ignoring the optional sublanguages that we sometimes add to it, is for the most part obligatory for speakers of that language … (Putnam (2004), 49).

The choice between different language games in these cases is decided pragmatically with respect to the use one would like to make of it, its explanatory forces, or its conceptual resources. Taking the wrong conceptual scheme or the wrong language, one might miss one's goals. The common ground for such different language games is, for one thing, natural language, and for another it is the speakers who are able to switch between these languages and reflect on how they use their words. Such a common ground provides us with a common ontology, that is to say it provides us with entities which can be approached by

different language games and therefore occur in various language games in different angles and with different properties.[92]

Conceptual incommensurability is the third relation and most extreme variant of relations between language games. In case of conceptual incommensurability there is no common ground of shared practices, but complete and fundamental difference in virtually all respects. Let me discuss this issue by way of an example.[93]

Imagine a distant culture, apologizing to a tree for cutting it ("him" or "her") down in order to perform some cultural ceremony, say for courting the sun.[94] Such an apology might meet three strategies of translation, interpretation, or making sense.

First, it might evoke a smile from a not very open-minded Occidental or Eurocentric perspective. From this point of view it seems strange to apologize to a tree for cutting it down. For Christmas, for instance, millions of trees are used every year, and nobody ever apologizes to these trees. The reason, in this view, is that apologies are directed at persons and not at things like trees and stones. If someone does it nonetheless, he or she might well raise our laughter.

The second strategy I want to consider is the strategy people with a certain esoteric flair would take. Apologizing to trees in such a cultural environment might earn undivided acclaim and admiration. From this perspective, we might describe the tribe's concept of nature as animated. The tribe's interaction with nature or with natural things is similar to how we usually treat persons. If natural things are something like persons, it makes sense to apologize to such a personalized nature. In Kantian terms, nature is conceived as a subject with a purpose in itself, rather than merely as an object which can be used to our pur-

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[92] This notion of trans-language-game identity poses some problems which would require further discussion. I would argue that presupposing such identity is connected to how we learn the language which presupposes these objects. But in taking our ordinary ways of speaking for granted, we may presuppose at this point that clarification can be reached.

[93] The example is mine. Putnam illustrates the matter with an example of Benjamin Lee Whorf's which involves a foreign language (Putnam (2004), 50-51).

[94] Totonacan Indians perform such a ceremony in which they apologize to a tree. The ceremony is described (the apologies are described as "blessing") at: http://www.vanilla.com/html/globe-voladores.html [accessed Dec. 24, 2004]. Special thanks to Marianne Hänseler for discussion on this example.

poses without restriction. Still, describing the tribe's behaviour this way leaves us at a certain loss with understanding it.

Still, the esoteric reaction displays a comparable Occidental attitude as does the first reaction described. While in the first strategy, the own culture is taken to be superior, in the latter strategy the picture of the "noble savage" is implicit and the culture of the tribe is taken to be superior to the "western", "occidental" or "Eurocentric" culture. We cannot simply take over this way of behaviour, since it does not fit our lives, as an assumed behaviour it keeps it's esoteric flair.

In both cases, a proper translation into our language fails. The semantic field for apologies in the distant culture is different from the semantic field in our languages. The first translation strategy just holds that apologies are not directed at trees or other things but only to persons (this may be regarded as an analytic truth). In this extreme case, the semantic field of the language into which one should translate is applied to the language which is to be translated. The second strategy of translation amounts to a revision of our use of notions and to simply taking over the semantic fields of the distant culture. In the first case, the distant culture is naïve, in the second it is simply noble, but both approaches lack critical distance. The first takes the own culture for superior, while the second take the foreign culture for ahead.

A third way to make sense of what the members of the distant culture are doing might be to question our language use and to change it. For instance, we might interpret the culture's apologies to the tree as following directly from its conception of nature, natural things, and human beings. We might compare it to the notion of sustainability which gains growing importance in recent decades. Interpreting the foreign culture's interaction in this way may give it a flavour of pioneer spirit and make it look progressive.

In relation to incommensurable languages, the basic idea is that a translation of a very distant foreign language involves an acquisition of understanding of the form of life in which this language is used, and it results in changes in the language into which the foreign language is translated (Putnam (2004), 50f). What goes on in such language change and in the groundwork of acquiring a shared basis is a change, extension, and differentiation of one's own practices. Presumed that the third strategy of understanding (or translation) of the apology to the tree is correct, what the example shows is that in trying to make sense, the semantic and pragmatic structures of the use of our words get in motion. It may be nec-

essary to reorganize the (pragmatic and semantic) relations between notions in the field. In any case, it is necessary to compare the uses of terms and maybe re-evaluate our own uses.

4.5 Putnam's Very Idea of Conceptual Pluralism

The doctrine of conceptual pluralism or conceptual relativism has been put to challenge by Davidson's critique of the idea of a conceptual scheme. As Davidson points out in "The very idea of a conceptual scheme"[95], such an idea is at work not only in Quine's critique of the "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"[96] but can as well be found in a monistic version in Kant's theoretical philosophy. Davidson's point is that the idea of a conceptual scheme, which is presumed to be some sort of ordering form for an unordered, given content, cannot be clarified properly. Rather, clarifications of the concept are confronted with paradox. Hence, Davidson claims that we cannot make sense of what it is for two languages to fail to be (partially or completely) intertranslatable. He rejects this idea as a third dogma of empiricism.

It is part of the very idea of incommensurability of conceptual schemes that we have no understanding access to fundamentally different forms of life with fundamentally different conceptual resources. Davidson's main point against complete failure of comparability is this:

> The dominant metaphor of conceptual relativism, that of differing points of view, seems to betray an underlying paradox. Different points of view make sense, but only if there is a common coordinate system on which to plot them; yet the existence of a common system belies the claim of dramatic incompatibility. (Davidson (1984), 184.)

Davidson holds that the idea of incommensurability and of conceptual relativism only makes sense if there is an Archimedean point of comparison. He further shows that the idea of partial incommensurability and partial difference in conceptual scheme faces the same challenge. If we would have access, there would be no incommensurability, and no difference in conceptual scheme. The paradox then is the following: one cannot conceive of conceptual relativity, conceptual pluralism, and conceptual incommensurability without presupposing a common ground, but if a common ground is presupposed, conceptual

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[95] Collected in Davidson (1984), 183-198.

[96] Collected in Quine (1980), 20-46.

schemes and fundamental differences vanish. The very idea of conceptual relativity and conceptual scheme is rendered moot and does not make any clear sense. Even the idea of conceptual monism is unintelligible, Davidson holds in allegation to Kant, and hence dismisses talk of conceptual schemes altogether. This idea of conceptual schemes is based on the view that conceptual schemes form an amorphous content, an idea Sellars calls the "Myth of the Given" (Sellars (1997)).

Davidson's criticism is pervasive and widely accepted. Still, some years later Putnam develops a version of conceptual relativity, which certainly is aware of Davidson's criticism and rejects the idea of an amorphous content:

> A metaphor which is often employed to express this is the metaphor of the 'cookie cutter'. The things independent of all conceptual choices are the dough; our conceptual contribution is the shape of the cookie cutter. Unfortunately, this metaphor is of no real assistance in understanding the phenomenon of conceptual relativity. Take it seriously, and you are at once forced to answer the question 'What are the various parts of the dough?' (Putnam (1988), 114.)[97]

The idea of different conceptual schemes as organizing an amorphous lump leads to an infinite regress since it calls up the question as to the unformed basis. It seems we cannot make sense of an unformed matter, an fact already pointed out by Davidson:

> We cannot attach a clear meaning to the notion of organizing a single object (the world, nature etc.) unless that object is understood to contain or consist in other objects. (Davidson (1984), 192.)

To describe matters this way, leads back to what Putnam criticizes as a metaphysical realist conception presupposing a ready-made world (see e.g. Putnam's "Why There isn't a Ready Made World"[98]).

Putnam's conceptual pluralism seems to be unfeasible in the face of Davidson's criticism. How can Putnam go on and positively conceive of the phenomena he calls conceptual relativity and conceptual pluralism? Davidson's criticism does not affect Putnam, since Putnam's view differs in at least three important aspects from the view Davidson attacks.

First, in contrast to Davidson, linguistic practices are not taken to be static but rather evolve dynamically. Language in Putnam is not the static and homogenous truth-conditional system with one over-all ontology. Davidson's account supposes a certain lin-

[97] See also Putnam (1987a), 33.

[98] Collected in Putnam (1983), 1-25.

guistic monism. According to Davidson, there is only *one* homogenous language which a radical interpreter speaks. In Putnam's words:

> … *one* language in which he can give the truth-conditions for *every* sentence in *every* language he claims to be able to understand … Putnam (1990), 104f).

If one gives up this idea, and holds that individual speakers are able to play various language games, incommensurability vanishes. A speaker may be well aware that telling jokes in most cases is different from telling the truth. Natural language is rather a system of variously interrelated dynamic linguistic practices or language games. Some of these linguistic practices are more basic than others, some share their ontologies, while other ontologies add up to one another and others provide optional, competing ontologies.

Second, pluralism does not intend to describe points of views of different subjects, at least this is not the primary intention of pluralism. Pluralism is not primarily a matter *inter subjects*. Rather, pluralism claims that the same subjects can perform various practices and language games. Pluralism of practice takes place *intra subjects*. Hence, the practitioners themselves are able to change their points of view and use the linguistic practice which fits a particular purpose best.

A third relevant difference follows from the first and has been discussed in chapter 2 and 3 extensively in connection with learning one's first language or learning practices from scratch: mastering and understanding practices is not a fundamentally interpretative or hermeneutical affair but rather a matter of getting into these linguistic practices, getting used to playing these games. One rather consequence is that we cannot do whatever we want to do with certain parts of languages. In other words, it is not possible to interpret all language games by one or the other linguistic practice. Rather, some vital parts of language are not reducible to or interpretable by other parts.

Fourthly, linguistic practices are not static but rather they evolve dynamically. Language games may change, we might be forced to revise and adjust them. one can emphasize that humans not only get introduced to their first language but are also able to acquire new linguistic (or other) practices. Different language games are not thought to be "intranscendable". In learning our first language we also learn to become aware of how we use our words and how others use them. Hence, we train our skills to reflect on our practices, and we learn to change points of view. By learning language, we acquire to playfully master changes of schemes or language games and changes of points of view. One part of learning to understand another person's utterances is to be aware of her possibly using a

word differently and of her possibly seeing the world differently.[99] Thus, even though another language may be incommensurable with one's own at first sight, understanding it, or making sense of it presents no fundamental problem for Putnam. If there may be no common ground, it has to be developed.

> What is often said is true, that all human languages are intertranslatable; but that does not mean that one can translate a current book in philosophy or a paper in clinical psychology or a lecture on quantum mechanics into the language of a primitive tribe without first coining a host of new technical terms in that language. (Putnam (1988), 89.)

Confronted with a fundamentally different language and a completely different form of life, new terms have to be coined to translate, say Derrida or Heidegger, into that foreign language. Such coinage surely entails training members of the distant culture in reading Derrida or Heidegger, too. As is obvious to anyone who ever taught philosophy or any other science, such training is needed even if it is one's own language in which these philosophers (or clinical psychologists, physicists, or what have you) write or talk. Learning philosophy or any other science is learning certain language games and certain practices which are intertwined with them.

To sum up, Davidson's problems can be met. As concerns his own view, Putnam does not have to accept the paradox Davidson raises. The proposed account which I claim Putnam holds differs in various aspects from both the account of Davidson and the account of language he criticizes. Let me emphasize these two differences again: The view of language defended here holds first, that linguistic practices are not taken to be static but rather evolve dynamically. Second, it holds that pluralism of linguistic practices is not primarily intended to explain differences in points of views of *different subjects*. Rather, the same subjects can take these different stances and are able to perform various practices. Practitioners are able to change their points of view and use the linguistic practice which fits their particular purposes best. In pragmatic pluralism, the problem of (radical) translation is a rather extraordinary case. Problems of incommensurability hardly occur. Both these points of difference draw on the thesis that an account of learning is central to an account of (linguistic) practices. Both draw furthermore on an account of how such practices can be

[99] Finally, as already mentioned, the present view does not presuppose the metaphysical conception of a reality which is supposed to be given absolutely and which Davidson mainly has in focus.

described. To provide such an account of how practices can be described is the aim of the last chapter.

5

The Practice of Philosophy

In the foregoing chapters, the relevant structural aspects of practices were gained from descriptions of practices. The idea behind this was that the structures of subjective skills an individual displays as well as the structures of the objective environment it deals with can be read off the practice the subject performs – provided there is an adequate set of notions with which the practice can be described. If this set of notions is inadequate, then the description has to be modified and additional the concepts, which are required, have to be coined. Wittgenstein's considerations concerning rule-following, for instance, are searchingly describing what goes on in rule-following, how we manage to be free in following a certain rule and still be guided by it, how we are able to reconcile objective and subjective aspects in normative practices, etc. This method is taken as a standard in Wittgenstein as well as in Putnam. Hence, in their practice of philosophy, the structural features of a practice are the fruits of searching descriptions of what is required for understanding, of what goes on in understanding or in failure of understanding, of what goes on in learning languages or in learning to follow rules. Thus, the practice of philosophy in both Wittgenstein and Putnam methodologically brings understanding at its limits. Their method is to inquire into the structures of objects and subjects and their interactions, by reflecting on descriptions of these structures and refining them. In these inquiries they both focus on exemplary cases. They look at how descriptions of these exemplary cases relate to our linguistic and other practices, how we explain them, how we bring them in accord with our lives and at what point we face paradox. They inquire into the limits of understanding by bringing understanding at limits.

At various places I put forward the claim that there is no way to determine the general form of all sentences and of all practices. If this is correct there are important consequences for our concept of understanding as well as for our concept of philosophy. For one thing, it will not be possible to determine a closed set of methods which could be termed "philosophical methods" or to specify "philosophical understanding" once and for all. This is the

reason why examples are crucial in philosophical practice. However, this methodological openness of philosophy should not be confused with the claim that philosophy is hopelessly relativistic and free floating.

In this last chapter, the practice and method of philosophy which has been displayed in the foregoing chapters is taken into focus. In the earlier chapters, one of the guiding ideas was that both the structures of subjective skills an individual displays and the structures of the objective environment it deals with can be read off the practice the subject performs. This theoretical background leaves us with two questions: First, how is freedom in practices is possible? Second, how can we guarantee the objectivity of what we read off an individuals practice?

As concerns the first question, we get an idea of how freedom in action is possible without loosing the sensitivity for the normativity of practices by looking at McDowell's concept of "Bildung" or "second nature" (5.1). Thus, in total opposition to Kripke's view of rule-following, normative restraint needs to be regarded as constitutive for freedom. This is the headstone of my alternative to Kripke's view of rule-following. Secondly, I will take a quick look at what we may say more generally about the structure and method of this philosophical practice (5.2). Concerning the issue of correctness and objectivity of the described subjective aspects of practices, it is instructive to take a look at Kant, who was the first to have addressed and answered this problem within theoretical philosophy with his supreme principle of synthetic judgments a priori. Kant's principle might be changed to a supreme principle of pragmatism. In Kant, the supreme principle provided philosophy with genuine philosophical "Erkenntnis". In the same sense, the supreme principle of pragmatism can be seen as opening room for genuine philosophical insight, for philosophical truths, or, in Putnam's terms, conceptual truths (5.3). Thus, Putnam's unintelligibility charges can be seen in a new light, since they provoke reflection on the structure of human practices and call our attention to issues that might prove to be philosophically fruitful and to enhance human understanding in general. Thus, reflection on understanding brought to limits, or reflection on sentences and claims which are (ultimately) unintelligible, may point at philosophically prolific issues since such reflection helps us to discover the struc-

ture of human practices (5.4). In this sense, failure in understanding guides us in our reflection and in our ambition to enhance our understanding of matters.[100]

5.1 Stepping Back: Freedom and Consciousness

Earlier, in part 3.1, we saw that pragmatic understanding may fail for different reasons. In case of failure on the pragmatic level, the understanding fails for lack of practical skills. These failures have their reason either in failure of getting the point of a particular use in a language game, as in the case of Kate, who failing to understand the word 'pig' used in a negative sense, just did not get what was meant to say. It may also be that the reason lies in lack of a whole language game and context of use (Tim and Lynn). In the latter case, this may either be only a subjective lack of skill while the language game already exists (Tim), or that we are in lack of words and their use – that is in lack of an adequate language game (Lynn). The difference between Tim and Lynn lies in our appreciation of the difference between the fact (1) that there is a perfect definition of "eigenvalues" a definition which Tim simply does not understand, and the fact (2) that there is hitherto not only no plausible explanation of how prions do effect spongiform encephalopathy in humans and other animals, but even no adequate concept of how this disease is caused.

These descriptions of how understanding fails are possible only if we presuppose a distinction between a subjective and an objective point of view. An objective perspective allows us to claim that Kate did not get the use of 'pig' in pejorative sense. We, who are acquainted with this use, realize that Kate is not. Even if we do not understand the definition of "eigenvalue" ourselves, we can determine that Tim lacks the required mathematical skills. Finally, even if we do not quite understand what the State of the Art is in molecular biology, we can understand what it means to say that with the present understanding of how diseases are caused we cannot explain prion-diseases. Failure in pragmatic understanding can be made explicit in pointing out in which aspects the subjective point of view differs from an objective point of view. As concerns describing the objective point of view, the focus in the cases of Tim and Lynn differ substantively, a difference we found also between cases of what I called subjective and objective learning. In the case of Tim and the notion of an eigenvalue, the failure can be identified as a failure to be familiar with a par-

[100] Some of the issues in sections 5.1 and 5.3 are discussed in Doğuoğlu (2007), sect. 3.

ticular language game. In the case of Lynn, however, we cannot identify what exactly is missing – we do not know how exactly an adequate explanation of causing the disease, and maybe this is just that did not yet encounter a comparable phenomenon or a comparable effective causation.

In the following, I will focus on the relevance of the distinction between a subjective and an objective point of view.

In his paper "Two Sorts of Naturalism"[101], John McDowell distinguishes two sorts of naturalism. The first of these sorts is what he calls a neo-Humean "disenchanted" conception of the natural world (McDowell (1998b), 174) according to which the world exhibits no intelligible structure on its own. Nature is intelligible only due to "operations of mind, and those operations are themselves just some of what goes on in nature, in itself meaninglessly, as it were" (McDowell (1998b), 174). We encountered this sort of reductive naturalism in Quine and Kripke before (see sections 2.2 to 2.4). The concept of nature which is at the heart of such naturalism does by itself not allow for reason, normativity, intelligibility, or freedom of action. These phenomena get lost in reduction. Thus it seems that naturalism does neither allow for ethical considerations. McDowell contrasts this view of nature with a second concept which allows for these phenomena. The relevant notion he borrows from Aristotle is the notion of a "second nature". Second nature, finds its natural place in this second sort of naturalism. In order to show this, McDowell discusses a provocative thought-experiment in which we are asked to imagine rational wolves (McDowell (1998b), 169ff.).

According to McDowell, a rational wolf would be able to step back and become conscious of what he does, roam his mind over the (physical) possibilities there are, and reason or think about how to go on. Whereas the common wolf cannot help being part of its pack and take part in, for example, hunting, the rational wolf would be in the position to see that he might shirk as well and thus, instead of partaking in the ever exhausting hunt, he could simply decide not to show up until "dinner is ready". In other words, while the common wolves cannot, at least as far as we know, reflect upon what they are doing, for they just do blindly what they always did (be it instinctive or trained), a rational wolf could consider

[101] Collected in McDowell (1998b), 167-197.

the reasons for possible actions. With rationality, McDowell therefore claims, the wolf attains freedom.

Against this background, our presumed rational wolf, reflecting on possible actions, might face the following quandary: which reasons should motivate him to exhaust himself in hunting activities although he could be content with keeping the fire and waiting for the prey to be delivered? In such a case, it is reasonable, McDowell claims, to argue within the bounds of what is good for wolves by drawing on natural facts as, for instance, joining forces in the hunt which is a matter of survival for wolves (even though, wolves being rational, they could, in principle, decide to organize their hunting patterns differently). Yet such reasons might be convincing for a rational wolf but not motivating. They might well record an objective requirement, but still he is free to act in disaccord.

The upshot of McDowell's argument is that by developing our capacities to step back from what we are doing implicitly and by developing and cultivating reason we acquire freedom and the capacity to see unexpected possibilities, new ways of doing things. Kripke (1982), for instance, becomes aware of unexpected ways to proceed in addition.

Nevertheless, according to McDowell, we should not lose our sensitivity to reasons that base on the very possibility of our practices. These reasons are even *natural reasons*, but natural reasons are not by themselves good reasons. Furthermore, they are not the only good reasons. We are free to leave them behind – for other reasons, or for no reason at all.

These are the two essentials of what McDowell, following Gadamer, calls "Bildung" or, following Aristotle, "second nature":[102] acquiring freedom and consciousness in our doings on the one hand without losing the sensitivity for how these practices work on the other hand.[103] Or, in McDowell's wording, "rational necessitation is not just compatible with freedom but constitutive of it" (McDowell (1996), 5). This is to say that we are free within our practices to follow certain rules or not – the normativity of our practices does not force us to do anything by itself. However, if we decide to act within a practice, if we decide to act according to (or against) the rules of a certain practice, we are not free to do whatever we want. In describing the ways in which addition might be misunderstood, Kripke actually draws, and indeed has to draw, on the practice of addition which is well entrenched.

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[102] The terms are introduced in McDowell (1996), lect. 4, sect. 7f.

[103] To the idea that rule-following amounts to acquiring a second nature see also Williams (1999), 177f.

Certainly, sometimes we may be at a loss what we should do, as, for example in Austin's famous "extraordinary cases" (Austin (1966), 68). Still, if we master the relevant techniques ordinary cases do not present problems. If Kripke (1982) keeps on questioning our practice of adding in fundamental ways, then he actually presupposes the practice of addition in his description of what might go wrong. Hence, we can in each case refer to what he describes and point out in what important respects the practice of addition differs from the practice of quaddition.[104] In fact, confronted with a Kripkean example, we can always refer to the differences so neatly described by Kripke himself. This is simply what we do. Indeed, those not sure about these differences do not master the techniques of addition properly – or they have, in McDowell's terms, lost the sensitivity for how this practice works. Awareness of what can go wrong and where the difference is between following according to a certain rule and not following it is part of what we call being able to follow a certain rule and being able to perform a certain practice.

5.2 The Supreme Principle of Pragmatism

Let me at this point turn to the methodological background which guided the descriptions of practices in the foregoing chapters. The maxim I followed is captured in a characterization of what Peacocke calls "local holism":

> Sometimes, perhaps always, a thing (property, relation) is individuated in part by its relations to other things, properties or relations. What it is to be that thing, property or relation cannot be properly explained without mentioning those other things, properties or relations. (Peacocke (1997), 243.)

This thesis is of such generality that it seems trivial. It may indeed be trivial thus generally stated. However, the idea gets its substance from actual cases. The substance comes from answers to various "which"-questions: which things, properties, or relations are individuated to which extent by which relations to which other things, properties, or relations. A further issue that has to be determined is whether the relation between what is explained

[104] The point is similar to Davidson's claim that we may be wrong in any one of our beliefs, or a whole bunch of them, but that it does not make sense to suppose that we are wrong in everything we believe (see, e.g., Davidson (2001), 213f).

and what explains is mutual or just one way.[105] These answers may vary for various things, properties, and relations – hence the qualification "local".[106] [cf. Rödl (2002)!]

The point I am up to is that the considerations on understanding and sense which we find in Putnam and which are recast in the first part of this study, are driven by the aim to answer these "which"-questions and to identify the relevant things, properties and relations that are required for a proper explanation of understanding and to determine in which way and to which extent they are of importance for understanding. Various considerations on learning were meant to add up to this clarification – the leading idea here was: if we cannot explain in purely behavioural terms what an individual is doing, then we need further (intentional, normative) notions and we have to suppose subjective intellectual and practical skills in the acting individual. It is thus that I was postulating that the practical skill of perceiving a barn as a barn (and not merely as an arrangement of splotches of colours or so), for example, requires other skills, such as being able to go around and inside the barn, touching it, etc.[107]

My criticism of Kripke's sceptical solution is raised in a similar vein and with the same goal. Kripke's view of matters clearly fails to explain how we are, as individual subjects, able to follow rules, in fact, he even claims that as individuals we only have the illusion to follow rules. My analysis of his failure leads to a notional framework which is supposed to avoid the deficiencies of Kripke's.

Indeed, Peacocke's characterization of local holism can be taken as a methodological maxim in consideration and reflection on philosophical explanations. It fits well with Put-

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105 If the dependence is only one way one would rather speak of a supervenience relation than of holism.

106 A different idea of holism or holistic systems is developed in Esfeld (2001)/Esfeld (2002a). See also Esfeld (2002b). The present view differs from Esfeld's conception of holism mainly in that the relevant properties need not be generic and not specific. The idea of generic properties is the following. Take, for instance, semantic properties like meaning: it is not certain specific meanings that count among the properties, but meanings in general. To take another example, let us say that "to be a person" is a generic holistic predicate; this is to say that the holistic predicate is not "to be this or that specific person" – to be you is not a holistic predicate – but it is to say that for something (someone) to be a person, there need to exist other things to which certain predicates (not necessarily the predicate "to be a person") apply in a way that these things together form a holistic system.

107 See also the issues for an explanation of which Peacocke takes local holism relevant: "What for instance is the relation between practical spatial abilities and mastery of concepts of places and spatial relations? Can a family of practical abilities also display a form of holism?" (Peacocke (1997), 245).

nam's project of discovering the ultimate unintelligibility of philosophical theses and with Wittgenstein's way to deal with philosophical problems. It finds expression in Wittgenstein's claim that understanding is to gain survey[108] and we further find it in line with the following remark:

> Wir sagen nicht, ein Hund spräche *möglicherweise* zu sich selber. … Wenn man das Benehmen des Lebewesens sieht, sieht man seine Seele. (*PU*, § 357.)

A comparable idea of coherent survey and of reflection of subjectivity is developed sketchily in McDowell (1996) and is credited to Gadamer (1990). Gadamer claims that the structure of a practice of a human or other living being reflects not only the structure of the world (or environment) this being lives in, but it as well reflects the subject's modes of freedom.[109] The structure of the behavioural relation[110] of some creature to its environment tells us about the world this creature lives in.

The aim thereby is not to reduce any of the elements of normative practices to any others, but rather to determine the relevant notions for adequate descriptions of normative practices and to explicate the role these notions or rather the elements they identify play within those practices. In the remaining of this section let me explain this methodological idea further in drawing some historical lines to Kant and rule out some objections.

In developing an account like the one of McDowell or Gadamer just mentioned, Haugeland holds that objectivity in understanding requires subjectivity:

> To understand the normative authority of objects, its source and its effectiveness, is to understand objectivity. In order to pursue this understanding, however, it will be necessary to make an apparent, and perhaps surprising, digression into *subjectivity*. (Haugeland (1998), 339).

As was argued in chapter 2, subjectivity does not need to be opposed to objectivity. Instead, it was argued that a subjective perspective is to be brought in line with an objective perspective. Hence, subjectivity, in Haugeland's terms, is involved with objectivity. Such involvement he claims to be "… a crucial element in the structure of objectivity. Therefore,

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[108] This thought turns up at various places in Wittgenstein from 1931 on; in *PU*, see § 125. In all places the terms are used as if interchangeable (e.g. Wittgenstein (2000), it. 111, p. 146; it. 114, p. 3; it. 116, p. 5; it. 135, p. 167, etc.).

[109] See Gadamer (1990), 448. John McDowell refers to these passages (see McDowell (1996), 115-19.

[110] "Behavioural relation" does not mean to indicate a restriction on behaviourism in a narrow sense. I use the term laxly as possibly containing normative or intentional notions here.

objectivity must be considered in its relation to subjectivity" (Haugeland (1998), 339). This is the reason for the quoted "surprising digression into subjectivity".

Note again that to consider subjectivity in order to explain objectivity does in this context not amount to relying on privacy of experience or the like. Still, this close connection between objectivity and subjectivity in practice is reminiscent of and therefore idealism lurks in such an idea. Indeed, Haugeland explains this idea by recourse Kant's passages on the supreme principle of synthetic judgements a priori (Kant (1990), B 193–7):

> … the *norms* governing the perceptions as such, and in virtue of which they can be objective, are inseparable from the *standards* governing, and indeed constituting, the chess phenomena as such; or, to make the Kantian paraphrase even more obvious: the conditions of the *possibility of objective perception* as such are likewise the conditions of the *possibility of the objects of that perception*. (Haugeland (1998), 254).

The account presented here agrees with this characterization of Haugeland's only under the following precautions.

First of all, Haugeland's paraphrase of Kant bears a mistake. Kant did not restrict the conditions of the possibility of objects to the conditions of subjective abilities of experience but solely claimed these subjective conditions to be conditions among others (not *the* conditions) of the objects of experience (Kant (1990), B 197). In Kant, the structure of subjective abilities constitutes only part of the structure of the objective. It seems implausible that the structure of subjectivity should determine all aspects of objectivity. The structure of what is objective is not simply reduced to the structure of the subjective. The way Haugeland puts the claim is adopting idealism.

Second, in Kant the structures are taken to be static and fixed once and for all. The question of how these structures are generated, or learnt, is not an issue – Kant's declared focus is to explain their validity and not their genesis (Kant (1990), B 1–2). Haugeland does not address this issue. In the present work, though, the structure is taken to be dynamic. The structures of subjectivity, that is the required intellectual and practical abilities and skills, are the result of an acquisition of a certain practice. Correspondingly the structures of objectivity are determined. This is why the issue of learning is of central interest. Kuhn quotes Michael Friedman as to Reichenbach's distinction between two meanings of the Kantian a priori. The first of these meanings "involves unrevisability and absolute fixity for all times", while the other proves to be "constitutive of the concept of the object of knowledge" (Kuhn (2000), 245.).

> Both meanings make the world in some sense mind-dependent, but the first disarms the apparent threat to objectivity by insisting on the absolute fixity of the categories, while the second relativizes the categories (and the experienced world with them) to time, place, and culture. Though it is a more articulated source of constitutive categories, my structured lexicon resembles Kant's a priori when the latter is taken in its second, relativized sense. Both are constitutive of possible experience of the world, but neither dictates what that experience must be. Rather they are constitutive of the infinite range of possible experiences that might conceivably occur in the actual world to which they give access. Which of these conceivable experiences occurs in that actual world is something that must be learnt, both from everyday experience and from the more systematic and refined experience that characterizes scientific practice. (Kuhn (2000), 245.)[111]

Note that what Kuhn calls "structured lexicon" here is comparable to what was called "language game" earlier, even though "lexicon" it emphasizes semantic aspects. The present account would side with Kuhn in claiming that the relevant structures[112] are not fixed once and for all. Still, they remain constitutive for what is the object of knowledge.

In the passage quoted above, Kuhn brings a third issue into play. Kant's view in Kant (1990) is decisively monistic.[113] However, with the account presented here monism does not comply. Neither does unrevisability. Hence, for the present account which takes not experience as its fundamental term, but rather practice, this is to say that the plurality of practices entails a plurality on the objective side as well as on the subjective side. As Kuhn points out this does not mean that practices determine objects and subjects, but only their structural properties. Hence, it is rather types of objects which are determined by practices rather than the objects themselves. In the same sense, practices do not determine the individual subjects as such, but types of subjective skills which an individual has to master to be able to perform the practice.

This stress on subjectivity, not subjects, and on objectivity, not objects, is what Wittgenstein has in mind when stressing "our" agreement in practice and in emphasizing that we reach rock bottom if only we dig deep enough in justifying our doings (§ 217).

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[111] Kuhn goes on saying: "The fact that experience within another form of life – another time, place, or culture – might have constituted knowledge differently is irrelevant to its status as knowledge." (Kuhn (2000), 245.) I do not agree with this latter claim of Kuhn's. I would hold that talk of knowledge having been "constituted differently" in another form of life is not intelligible. The concept of knowledge is related to the practices in which it is used.

[112] Kuhn associates "structure" here to the structure of the categories and not to the structure of possible experience, but the difference can be neglected for our purpose for these structures are in close contact in the KrV.

[113] Note however that Putnam detects an "incipient pluralism" in the course of Kant's further development (Putnam (1995b), 30).

we reach rock bottom if only we dig deep enough in justifying our doings (§ 217). Practices are not something we agree *upon*, but they are the basis we agree *in*. This basis allows us to act according to a rule blindly, without choosing, and, for the time being, without justification. This kind of agreement in form of life or practice is more of a general "attunement" or accordance in form of life than an "agreement on a given occasion" (Cavell (1979), 32). Agreement in form of life and in language provides the basis for disagreement in opinion. We can find differences in what we say only if we accord in our use of words (see *PU*, §§ 241f).

In philosophical tradition the issue of specific philosophical truth is commonly connected to a substantive notion of truths which are not empirical truths. In Kant's theoretical philosophy, for instance, the concern is synthetic judgements a priori or transcendental knowledge (Kant (1990), B 13f, B 25). After the positivist attack on Kant's notion of synthetic a priori judgements, only analytic is left to be a priori valid. All other truths are taken to be empirical, or in Kant's term: "synthetic *a posteriori*".[114] The only analytic truths positivists accepted were, as Quine puts the matter, truths by virtue of the meaning of terms.[115] "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" attacks this dichotomy of analytic and synthetic truths, in other words the dichotomy between truths by virtue of meaning alone and factual truths. *Nolens volens* Quine thus reissues the discussion on philosophical truth (see, e.g., "The Analytic and the Synthetic", collected in Putnam (1975), 33–69). Putnam takes it that what Quine abandons is the dichotomy rather than a distinction. Putnam recasts his own view as arguing,

> … that one can accept Quine's insight (that there are large ranges of statements that cannot be simply classified as either analytic truths or statements of observable fact) while retaining the modest idea that there are also cases that fall on either side of the following specifiable distinction: statements of a language that are trivially true in virtue of the meanings of their words and statements that are not … (Putnam (2002a), 13.)

Putnam's point of argument is that those statements that are not *trivially* true in virtue of the meanings of their words do *not* necessarily all belong to the same group of state-

[114] See e.g. Hahn (1988), 55.

[115] Indeed, the aim was to leave the field of analytic truths to truths of logic and mathematics was taken to be available trough logic (to the latter claim see Carnap (1928), xi).

ments.[116] They are not simply statements about facts, describing reality – "there are many *kinds* of statements that are 'not analytic'" (Putnam (2002a), 13)[117]. Among these kinds of statements, there may be philosophically interesting kinds. This view at least in principle allows for a substantive notion of philosophical insights which are neither trivially analytic (as "All bachelors are unmarried") nor simply true descriptions (or scientific truths, for that matter). Conditions for such truths are that they are under rational control and that they are governed by certain standards and aims. It is not necessary that they be "fact-stating" or empirical:

> There are many sorts of statements … that are not descriptions, but that are under rational control, governed by standards appropriate to their particular functions and contexts. Enabling us to describe the world is one extremely important function of language; it is not the only function, nor is it the only function to which questions such as "Is this way of achieving this function reasonable or unreasonable? Rational or irrational? Warranted or unwarranted?" apply. (Putnam (2002a), 33.)

In his writings Putnam mentions the objectivity of ethics, of moral discourse, or of value judgements.[118] There are not much general reflection on how such rationally controlled truths could be found, where they could be found and what standards they are subject to. However, we find some remarks on these matters in Putnam and they can be fruitfully related to what has been said in the preceding chapters.

In discussing the grounds for objective truth in ethics, Putnam claims that "(to use Kantian language) one thing physics cannot do is account for its own possibility" (Putnam (2002a), 106). This is to say that the practice of physics is structured a certain way, and it is this structure which indicates which objects there possibly are in physics. Prions, for instance, are not among these objects, at least as far as we know until now. This claim is meant to indicate that there are other truths than only truths of science. If true, however, it states a paradigmatically philosophical truth.

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[116] The initial strategy to separate questions of analyticity from questions of meanings is due to Ziff (1967) (quoted in Putnam (1987b), 272).

[117] See also Putnam (2004), 61.

[118] The issue of fact-value dichotomy is for the first time discussed at length in Putnam (1981), ch. 6&9. The paper "Literature, Science, and Reflection" (collected in Putnam (1979), 83-94) is probably the Putnam's first contribution to the issue of morals or "how to live" (Putnam (1979), 83). For later contributions, which increasingly draw on American pragmatism, see also the essays collected in part II of Putnam (1990), the essays in part III of Putnam (1994), Putnam (2002a), and Putnam (2004).

All of this is reminiscent of Kant's supreme principle of all synthetic judgements, in which Kant states that every object is restricted by the conditions necessary to arrive at synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition of a possible experience (Kant (1990), B 197). For synthetic judgements to be possible a priori and objectively valid, the conditions of possibility of experience have to be conditions of possibility of the objects of experience. This is to say that among the various conditions of possibility of the objects of experience are also conditions of possibility of experience. These conditions of possibility of experience are subjective in the sense that experience is possible only for subjects. At the same time these conditions are objective (or "objectively valid"), since they turn out to be formal conditions of possibility of the objects of experience.

The main points of difference between the present view and Kant's is, firstly, that the basic notion here is practice, not "Erfahrung" and, secondly, that the present view holds that there is a plurality of practices, and that these practices and their structures are subject to change. But as we have argued in earlier chapters, the subjective skills which enable us to perform certain practices turn out to be objectively relevant since they are relevant for the objects of those practices. Hence we might even dare to advance the following "supreme principle of pragmatism": the conditions of possibility of practices are at the same time conditions of possibility of the objects of practices. In other words, the conditions which structure the practices are structuring the objects of these practices. Subjective skills necessary to learn or perform a certain practice are such structural or formal conditions of this practice. As in Kant, such subjective conditions may claim objective validity since they have an influence on the structure of the objects of the relevant practice. Such objective statements about the formal conditions of practices are truly *philosophical* insights.

5.3 Understanding at Limits, Conceptual Truths and Surveying Practices: Putnam's Unintelligibility Arguments Revisited

Putnam most recently calls such philosophical insights into the structures of practices "conceptual truths".[119] Conceptual truths are not descriptive; again: not each and every ob-

[119] See Putnam (2004), 60-67; see also "Rethinking Mathematical Necessity" collected in Putnam (1994) (where Putnam does not speak of "conceptual truth" but of (presently) unintelligible sentences) and Putnam (1995a), esp. IV&V. [As concerns conceptual truths as constitutive for our concepts see also

jective truth must state empirical facts or describe reality. According to Putnam "it is time we stopped equating *objectivity* with *description*" (Putnam (2002a), 33). Still these truths are taken to state objective truths and are under "rational control". Conceptual truth is linked to making sense, and hence to what is at issue in the present study:

> What makes a truth a conceptual truth, as I am using the term, is that it is impossible to make (relevant) sense of the *assertion* of its negation. (Putnam (2004), 61.)

"Making (relevant) sense" is supposed to mean "making sense in practice". Conceptual truths are conceptual truths only within the relevant practice – or rather of the relevant practice. The sense of a sentence can only be determined in a practical context. Hence, conceptual truths do not state a mere lexical connection between the meanings of words like, for example, between "bachelor" and "unmarried". Rather, what conceptual truth state cannot intelligibly be disputed within the practice in which these truths are conceptual truths. They are truths which "do not have negations that we (presently) understand" (Putnam (1994), 256), since they are fundamental to the relevant practice. There is not context for their negation to make sense. Hence, understanding or making sense of conceptual truths in this sense brings understanding at limits.

Note further, that since practices may change in time, their negations are *presently* unintelligible and not for all times. Conceptual truths are revisable and corrigible.[120] Changes in the structure of a practice may have the consequence that the negation of a certain truth, which has been held to be conceptual, becomes intelligible.[121] As statements

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Glock (2001), 84. Still, Glock insists on these truths being analytic – a claim which occurs already in Glock (1996), where he irritably counts analytic truths among the interesting necessary truths, even though he refers to Kant (Glock (1996), 200). "Thus Wittgenstein explains logical necessity by reference to the distinction between sense and nonsense which we draw by means of our norms of representation." (Glock (1996), 202.) "The point of my argument is not that we have to retain a certain number of beliefs – a point Quine accepts – but that some uses of sentences must be normative rather than descriptive. There must be standards of correctness which exclude certain combinations of words as nonsensical. A predicate like "bachelor" is meaningful only insofar as its application is incompatible with that of certain other predicates, for example, "married." (Glock (1996). 222.) "My discussion suggests that Wittgenstein not only stressed the normative aspects of language, but showed, against empiricist reductionism, that they are crucial to the very possibility of meaningful discourse". (Glock (1996), page!). See also Rödl (2005), Einleitung.]

[120] Cp. "The aim of philosophy in general, and ethics in particular should not be *infallibility* (or a set of eternal theoretical truths)." (Putnam (2004), 31.)

which has been held to be conceptual, becomes intelligible.[121] As statements about the structure of practices, conceptual truths in Putnam's sense are not related to a *particular* situation, but to situations generally, and determine the structure of situations and contexts in which sentences within a certain practice can make sense at all. It is thus that conceptual truths are "of great *methodological* (and not only "psychological") significance, a matter of how inquiry is structured" (Putnam (2004), 62). Conceptual truths express the structure of practices. They express the fundamental functioning of our practices and by this token take over what in the philosophical tradition is called "foundations of knowledge but in the sense in which Wittgenstein claims:

> Ich bin auf dem Boden meiner Überzeugungen angelangt. Und von dieser Grundmauer könnte man beinahe sagen, sie werde vom ganzen Haus getragen. (Wittgenstein (2000), it. 175, 19r-v.)[122]

It is one task of philosophy to determine such structural foundations of human practices and make them explicit. Philosophy has to provide adequate concepts for the description of practices, or more precisely, it's aim is to clarify the rationale, the constitutive elements, and the boundaries of practices. In this sense, philosophy is descriptive and not prescriptive. It is analytic since it aims at an adequate analysis of human practices. But philosophy is not restricted to mere conceptual analysis as for example Peter Hacker is advertising it:

> The aim of philosophy is the clarification of the forms of sense that, in one way or another, are conceptually puzzling … (Hacker 2007, 19.)

If philosophers would have restricted themselves to conceptual analysis, most important philosophical notions, as for example the notion of separation of powers in political philosophy, would not have been developed. Philosophers do not simply describe the world they have the power to change it.[123] The remarks here take up the central results and insights of the foregoing chapters and sketch a picture of philosophy as it stands behind what I would like to call Putnam's humanism with a pragmatic face.[124]] This in essence is Wittgenstein's idea of gaining reflective survey of human practices (*PU* §§ 122, 125; see also § 5*)*.

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[121] See the example concerning the sum of the angles in triangles given in Putnam (2004), 61f.

[122] Putnam quotes the second of these sentences in Putnam (2004), 63.

[123] As already mentioned in the introduction, this is how Michael Hampe put it in discussion with Peter Hacker in a colloquium in Zurich in May 2007.

[124] Putnam mainly in discussion rejects to be a pragmatist. He surely is a humanistic philosopher (see also part II of Putnam (2004)).

Such survey of human practices is gained by means of an inquiry into the structural foundations of these practices. The qualification "conceptual" indicates two things, first, that it need not necessarily to be only linguistic practices which are subject to philosophy, even though probably every human practice can be reflected in language. But second, this indicates a difference to accounts which focus on an analysis of linguistic meaning (or understanding), as, for instance, Tugendhat (1976).

This conceptual analysis is undertaken by reflection on the practice, on how it works, on what is possible within it, what is relevant to it, etc. Philosophical reflection cannot absolutely be detached from the practices it deliberately ponders. The idea is that the statements determining what is intelligible (and what is not), and what is possible (and what is not) cannot be stated in the void but can only be taken to determine these limits within a certain language game or within a certain practice. Methodologically, survey is gained among others by scrutinizing and criticizing other philosophical conceptions, by reflection on the presuppositions of our practices of philosophical reasoning and inquiring. Even though it is tied to practices, in the survey and comparison of different practices understanding goes beyond the particular practices it surveys.[125] Determining the limits of what makes sense amounts to determining the limits of what is intelligible by a subject mastering the practice, and of what counts as objectively possible within it.

Various things need emphasis here. Reflection on practices draws on the practices on which it reflects and is limited thereby. This may seem trivial, but it is central in rejecting unintelligible philosophical positions like sweeping, omnibus scepticism. Conceptual truths which result from such reflection draw their sense from the practices they reflect upon. Furthermore, reflection on practices may proceed by comparison of more than just one practice. In the discussion concerning conceptual pluralism (4.4) I claimed that one single practitioner masters various techniques and can perform various practices. Philosophical reflection upon practices therefore can compare structural elements of practices. Such comparison of different practices is synchronous, while cases of learning present material for diachronical investigation. At various places in chapter 3 my claim was that in reflections on learning one can determine what is central to a particular practice – without it, the

[125] This very idea of surveying practices is, in effect, akin to Brandom's "making it explicit" (Brandom (1994)). Applied to our discussion this would mean that understanding leaves practice as it is and makes it and its boundaries explicit by marking it off from others, reflecting its rationale.

practice is not possible. What is essential for a subject to perform a practice, for instance: if she has to have a certain skill or if she cannot acquire the practice if she is not in contact with certain sorts of objects, then these are conditionally relevant to the practice.

Note further, that this is not to say that philosophical practice is particular are immune to criticism or revision nor that they are, all by themselves, *justified*, even though some human practices have – to some extent at least – their own *right*, stemming from their relevance to our lives. No practice is immune to revision; there might be good reasons to call its relevance into question.

As concerns the start of philosophical reflection, one may hold that it often takes its start from a paradox we run into in practice.[126]

Different language games, Putnam holds, are "subject to different standards", they possess "different sorts of applications" and have "different logical and grammatical features" (Putnam (2004), 21f). Above I claimed that philosophy aims at reflection on practices, but I also referred to Putnam as claiming that conceptual truth and philosophical truth, is subject to rational control and has to comply with certain standards. It is only consequent to say that philosophy itself is a practice, in case of theoretical philosophy it is a practice of reflection on practices with the aim to identify their structures.

Hence what counts as a good argument in philosophy is subject to the standards and aims of the very practice of philosophy in which these arguments are put forward. It further depends on the logical and grammatical features of the notions used in these arguments. To some extent at least, these standards and aims and these features are disputed and subject to argument themselves. Again, philosophical arguments, however, and positions are restricted in their explanatory power to the practices they reflect upon. Evaluations of arguments further may be subject to revision if good reasons turn up. Interesting philosophical cases can never be filed.

So what to make of these insights in connection with Putnam's unintelligibility arguments? Let us briefly return to one of these arguments again. In connection with positions in the philosophy of mind, Putnam challenges ways of speaking like the following (cp. section 1.5):

[126] For the idea that philosophy may arise from paradox see Schulthess (2004).

[7] There could be soulless automata or zombies, or in other words: it is possible that certain people do not have any mental properties, but all of their physical properties are the same as if they did and their physical environments are the same. (Cp. Putnam (1999), 83.)

According to Putnam's methodological guideline we should deal with such positions as follows:

> In each case, one has to listen to the story the philosopher tells [about how a certain claim is to be understood], and show why and how it is incoherent. (Putnam (2001a), 23).

Consequently, in his analysis of [7], Putnam analyzes the story that could be told by Jaegwon Kim. Putnam argues to the conclusion that central terms used in the story are borrowed from various language games and are brought together in [7] without there being any coherence in use. "Soul" and "mind", for instance, are borrowed from religious discourse. The uses of these words in religious discourse cannot be reconciled with talk of physical properties. This leads to the philosophical paradox of the relation between mind and body: If mind is interwoven with the body, proofs to the immortality of the soul (or of mind), which may be important in religion, prove to be rather difficult; if, on the other hand, mind and matter are taken to be completely separate, then we the commerce of mind and body becomes a rather obscure affair.

The lesson to be learnt from the old paradox of mind and body is that in these discussions, words are used incoherently. No adequate context in which [7] could be stated coherently can be found or construed as yet; the sentence remains "ultimately unintelligible". But this is not the end of the story Putnam is about to tell. Rather, he takes his diagnosis as a starting point for further philosophical reflection. He proposes to reject a sharp dichotomy of the mind and the body or matter by drawing on "Greek views" of the soul (Putnam (1999), 96–8). Putnam rather prefers to talk of "mental abilities" rather than some sort of "mental substance":

> Mind talk is not talk about an immaterial part of us, but rather is a way of describing the exercise of certain abilities we possess, abilities which supervene upon the activities of our brains and upon all our various transactions with the environment, but which do not have to be reductively explained using the vocabulary of physics and biology, or even the vocabulary of computer science. (Putnam (1999), 37f.)

We have seen that adequate descriptions of such abilities require not only an objective perspective but as well a subjective perspective. Adequate descriptions require a description of what the subject is able to do, require a description of her intentions and plans, her

will and preferences. These mental abilities are not among the objects of science, or rather, they can be subject to science as neurobiological processes only, as far as we presently know. However, science cannot cover all relevant aspects. There can be no understanding without personal empathy, engagement or involvement. We cannot properly understand somebody without being to a certain extent familiar or at home with the life the relevant person leads. We cannot understand processes and things without accounting for how they are embedded in their surroundings. We cannot understand how things stand and what the matter is, without an idea of how else things could be, how matters were earlier in time, or how things usually develop, just in the same sense as we cannot understand political or social conflicts without a historical perspective.

It needs emphasis that the question as to the correctness of an analysis like Putnam gives in his examples cannot be decided by strict determination but is rather a matter of ongoing argument. Such arguments are not strict arguments, even though as trained philosophers we might recognize reasonable and coherent explanations in ordinary cases "in a flash" and as soon as we are confronted with them. Learning a certain practice the learner is rendered sensitive to the structure or grammar of this practice. Learning to follow rules makes sensitive to what is right and what is wrong according to certain rules. In this sense, learning to argue philosophically is to become sensitive to the structure and spirit of (good) philosophical explanations. Hence, disagreement or misunderstanding of a certain story in philosophy or in any other science might root in a lack of acquaintance with the problems the story deals with, or the story might be simply incoherent. Putnam's claim usually is that the story has the air of being intelligible, but in fact is not. As concerns a lack of acquaintance, one of the main standards of philosophy is that philosophical practice is not esoteric, that is, it is clearly learnable. There is no coherent practice that could not in principle be learnable by humans having the usual abilities and a bit motivation.

5.4 Philosophical Understanding with Anthropological Focus

Let me conclude these reflections on the reflective practice of philosophy by touching on an aspect which is of increasing concern in Putnam's writings. Ever since a short paper with the title "Literature, Science, and Reflection" (Putnam (1979)), Putnam urges that there is rational constraint on moral issues and that morality is not just subjective. This concern with moral issues deepens with Putnam's reflection on Wittgenstein and American

pragmatism and finally peaks in his insistence that "what has weight in our lives should also have weight in philosophy" (Putnam (1999), 70). Insisting on what is relevant in our lives is insisting on us as human beings who not only do science or philosophy but who also live a life with friends and family, who listen to music, enjoy art and literature, and who are concerned with world politics as well as with local political challenges. The idea is that these aspects of life should have their place within our philosophical world view.

Putnam's charge as to the unintelligibility of certain sentences is based on the claim that some words, like "soul", have been taken out of context and used in a completely different context. The charge as to the unintelligibility of such sentences is that some intuition, namely that certain beliefs may be false or each of our beliefs in principle can be false, are generalized and taken to apply to all contexts and practices.

One of the reasons which lead Putnam to critically oppose certain metaphysical ideas or sceptical concerns is for the vast implications these claims have to our lives. For one thing, the generality of the aim to go beyond all practice is misled. For another, they do not comply with practices which have relevance in our lives. Coherence of our practices not only includes coherence in thought and coherence in action but also coherence of thought and action. Thus, metaphysical and epistemological issues have clear implications for moral and political philosophy and vice versa. For example, coherence of thought and action implies that at least those subjects who are acknowledged as subjects are to be treated as such. This fact is often overseen or neglected. Langton (1995), e.g., shows that solipsism does not only affect epistemology but would affect the way people are treated.

The imperative to be coherent in our practices pervades all of philosophy regardless of disciplinary boundaries. The issue is discussed in Rödl (1998):

> Worum es geht, ist, dass man jemanden, *insofern* man ihn als Subjekt betrachtet, nicht als Automaten betrachtet und umgekehrt. … Befürworter wie Gegner der Meinung, dass Automaten denken können, glauben oft, die Entscheidung darüber hinge davon ab, ob es etwas gibt, was Personen können und Automaten nicht. Dabei ist vorausgesetzt, es gebe eine Personen und Automaten umgreifende Verwendung von "können". Damit hat man die Differenz der Rede über Personen und über Automaten schon übersehen. Wenn ich mich auf ein Wesen als Person beziehe, rede ich von seinen Weisen zu sein und seinem freien Vollziehen. Wenn ich mich auf das Wesen als Automaten beziehe, von Zuständen und mechanischen Abläufen. Man kann fragen: Soll ich mich so oder so zu ihm stellen? Soll ich so oder so über ihn reden? Man verkennt den Ernst dieser Frage, wenn man dieses Sollen für das epistemische hält. (Rödl (1998), 276f.)

The difference between persons and automata does not admit of degrees. It is rather a fundamental difference in the way we speak, a difference in conceptual relations between the terms used. In short, it is a difference in the conceptual schemes:

> Der Unterschied um den es hier geht, ist nicht graduell. Er kann nicht *innerhalb einer Beschreibungsform* gemacht werden, denn es ist ein Unterschied zwischen Aussageformen. Es ist ein Unterschied zwischen Aussagen über mechanische Beziehungen und Aussagen über Erkenntnisbeziehungen. (Rödl (1998), 278.)

Taking persons in every aspect as mere automata amounts to a denial of their subjectivity, of their asserting, of their having beliefs, of their justifying their beliefs and of their capacity to recognize how things are:

> Indem man jemanden als Automaten ansieht, seine Sprache als kausale Struktur, sein Überlegen, Begründen und Rechnen als Abfolge innerer Zustände, hat man es sinnlos gemacht, ihn als Subjekt zu bezeichnen, als jemanden, der Behauptungen aufstellt und Meinungen hat, sie begründet oder im Wahrnehmen erkennt, wie die Dinge liegen. Die mechanische Perspektive schliesst die normative Perspektive aus. (Rödl (1998), 285.)

The views of Rödl and Langton are fully in line with Putnam's overall pragmatic concerns in philosophy (Putnam (1999), 89–91). One of the tasks of philosophical understanding – and not its least – is to provide a coherent picture of the world and our practices in which there is a place for human persons. This, to our luck, is a reflective task which will never be ending.

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Index of Names

Curriculum Vitae of Ulvi Doğuoğlu

born June, 27, 1968, Swiss citizen from Basel (BS) und Walterswil (SO)

Schools, Studies, Scientific and Professional Education

1975 – 1983	Primary and secondary schools in St. Gallen
1983 – 1987	Grammar school in St. Gallen (Kantonsschule St. Gallen, today: Kantonsschule am Burggraben, St. Gallen); General qualification for university entrance with focus on mathematics and natural sciences (Matura Typus C)
1988 – 1990	Studies in Computer Science (First intermediate degree in Computer Science), ETH Zurich
1990 – 1998	Studies in Philosophy, History of Modern Times and Economic History in combination with Social Economics; (Master of Arts), University of Zurich
2000 – 2005	Papers given at conferences and symposia in Kirchberg am Wechsel (A), Mendrisio (CH), Basel (CH), Bern (CH), Fribourg (CH), Istanbul (TR), Santiago de Compostela (E))
2001	Research visit at The University of Chicago,(USA) with Prof. Dr. James Conant (two months)
2005	Doctoral exam at the Faculty of Arts, University of Zurich, Supervisors: Prof. Dr. Peter Schulthess (Zurich), Prof. Dr. Michael Esfeld (Lausanne)
2006 – 2007	Leadership training for Executive Managers, University of Zurich

Professional Experience

1990 – 1996	Teaching assignments and teaching substitutions in mathematics and physics at various grammar schools (Kantonsschule Wattwil, Kantonsschule am Burggraben, St. Gallen, Kantonsschule Zürich-Oerlikon, Lehrerseminar Rorschach, Berufsmittelschule St. Gallen)s
1993 – 1998	IT-support and assistant in compliance office, CS Fides, Zürich
1997 – 2001	Teaching assignment in philosophy, ethics, and history at the grammar school in Heerbrugg (Kantonsschule Heerbrugg)
2002 bis 2003	Teaching assignment in philosophy and ethics at the grammar school in St. Gallen (Kantonsschule am Burggraben, St. Gallen)
2000 – 2005	Research Assistant at the Department of Philosophy, University of Zurich (Prof. Dr. Peter Schulthess)
2000 – 2006	Teaching assignments in philosophy at the Department of Philosophy, University of Zurich
2003 – 2005	Research Associate at the Institute for Behavioural Science, ETH Zürich (Prof. Dr. Karl Frey)
2005 – 2007	Executive Manager adjoined to the Head of Department of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, University of Zurich (UZH, www.uzh.ch)
As of Sept., 2007	Research Fellow, Director of the Academic Affairs Unit, Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW, www.zhaw.ch)